

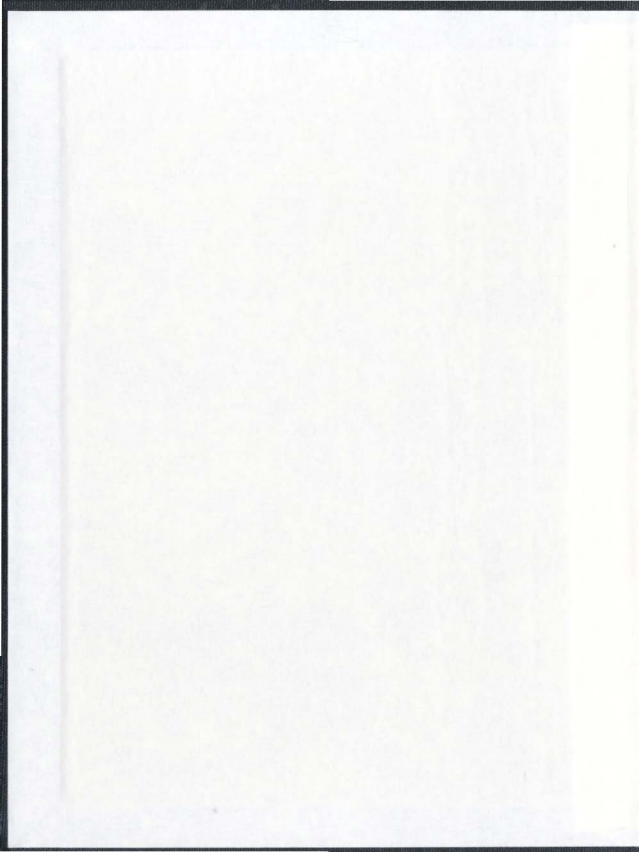
THE NEWSPAPER PRESS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
NEWFOUNDLAND:  
POLITICS, RELIGION, AND PERSONAL JOURNALISM

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MAUDIE WHELAN









**THE NEWSPAPER PRESS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEWFOUNDLAND:  
POLITICS, RELIGION, AND PERSONAL JOURNALISM**

by

© Maudie Whelan

A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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Faculty of Arts  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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## Abstract

Given Newfoundland's geographical constraints, its small and scattered population, limited readership, and prevailing illiteracy, the large number of newspapers published throughout the nineteenth century is a paradox demanding closer attention. These newspapers contain fragments of a fishing society's history still unexamined. Temperance and poverty are only two such examples. Bound up with religion and politics, which have characterized Newfoundland history generally, these volatile issues also infused its journalism. Although used extensively as sources by historians, the newspapers have not been approached as a legitimate field of study in their own right. This thesis begins to correct the anomaly.

It examines approximately 25 different newspapers during the years between 1832 and 1899, and reviews an early period, 1807 to 1832, during which the newspaper press was established. The discussion reveals the complexities of the press of the society it reflected and shaped. Censorship at the beginning, led gradually to more liberal laws, followed by a mix of political patronage and commercial independence. The press, confined until the late 1870s to St. John's and Conception Bay on the Avalon Peninsula, the centre of government, trade, and commerce, reinforced the differentiation between urban and rural life. Journalism expressed the personal religious beliefs and political ambitions of publishers and editors. Their demise, and that of their newspapers, marked the beginning of a new era in the 1880s, when a new outpost press emerged, and a daily press developed in St. John's.

Literacy improved over time, but the habit of reading newspapers remained the prerogative of the elite in urban centres where it had been cultivated. Twillingate sustained a local newspaper, due in part, to the prevalence of wage-based industry, and a daily press in St. John's survived. The introduction of the telegraph and railway did not, as might have been expected, spur the expansion of the newspaper market. Editors avoided criticism of the telegraph monopoly and exploited the political railway debate, seemingly without seriously considering their potential for a newspaper industry. To the end of the century, the Newfoundland press remained a marginal force for change in the lives of the people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CNS —	Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, MUN
CO —	Colonial Office documents, PRO (mfm. CNS Archive, MUN)
DCB —	<i>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</i> . Volumes VI, 1987 (1821-1835); VII, 1988 (1836-1850); VIII, 1985 (1851-1860); IX, 1976 (1861-1870); X, 1972 (1871-1880); XI, 1982 (1881-1890); XII, 1990 (1891-1900); XIII, 1994 (1901-1910)
ENL —	<i>Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador</i>
GN —	Government of Newfoundland, official papers and correspondence
JHA —	<i>Journals of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland</i>
mfm —	microfilm
MHA —	Member of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland
MUN —	Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's
PANL —	Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's
PRL —	Provincial Reference Library, Newfoundland Collections, A. C. Hunter Library, Arts and Culture Centre, St. John's
PRO —	Public Records Office, Kew, London, England

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The Newfoundland newspaper press of the nineteenth century has been an important general primary source for political and social historians. Until now, these newspapers have not been examined as an historical subject in their own right, and for their significant influence in shaping as well as reflecting Newfoundland society. The commercial interests that initiated the first newspaper in 1807, later led to the production of more journals in St. John's and Conception Bay, generating competition and opening the way for the expression of political and religious conflict. Thus, commerce, politics and religion were the cornerstones on which the press was built and relied for its existence -- characteristics that identify newspapers as businesses operating at a time when politics and religion were linked culturally and intellectually.

A rhetoric of liberal reform challenged conservative views, but class distinctions were made clear by the press itself, a literate medium in a largely illiterate society. Education was extremely limited and poverty was widespread. The unevenness of economic returns in a precarious fishery, and the system of truck that afforded workers little or no cash, left many insecure and some destitute on a continuing basis. Politicians, professionals, and newspaper proprietors on the other hand, were paid in cash, owned property, and had personal assets. Radical reform on behalf of workers received lip-service, but no labour press emerged in Newfoundland until the twentieth century. Poverty was treated as a political issue, its solution a constant topic of

editorial debate connected sometimes with sectarian conflict, or with intemperance, and was, some editors argued, a reason for union with Canada.

The new technologies of steam-generated power and telegraphy after mid-century had some influence on the introduction of daily newspapers in St. John's which came into their own toward the end of the 1870s and were further stimulated by talk of railway development in the 1880s and 1890s. This, along with a new industrial wage economy based on mining in the northern district of the island, saw a new outport press emerge in Notre Dame Bay. Although that mining initiative petered out toward the end of the century, the strong temperate, religious, and politically-involved community supported its newspaper in Twillingate to the mid-twentieth century.

## 1.2

### Objective

This thesis builds on an earlier descriptive analysis of the establishment and development of a newspaper press in St. John's between 1807 and 1832, an important historical watershed, and represented a first attempt to open the field.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this work is to advance the study of Newfoundland journalism history from the 1830s to the end of the century, providing a set of reference points for organization and interpretation as a foundation for future scholarly development. In order to provide a conceptual framework, this study views the newspaper press as a collective social

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<sup>1</sup>Maudie Whelan, "Journalism in Newfoundland: A Beginning History," (MJ thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1993).

institution, and distinguishes newspaper journalism from all other publications, such as magazines or pamphlets. Pamphlets were issue-specific as well as time-specific, usually of a political nature, and usually issued only once. Magazine content was almost the same as newspaper content, and was referred to as magazine journalism, but it differed in format and was published less frequently than newspapers. Newspapers, also called journals, were published regularly -- weekly, bi-weekly, tri-weekly, or daily (except Sunday). They contained the most current official, political, and commercial information in the form of reports, proclamations, and advertising. Newspapers also contained editorial comment and letters to the editor; literary articles -- informative, educational and entertaining, both fictional and non-fictional -- as well as poetry and verse, and announcements of births, deaths, and marriages.

This study is concerned with newspaper journalism as it pertained mainly to official, political and commercial information; news event reports, human interest, or community life; editorial comment and letters to the editor. It does not include advertising content, although reference to advertising and advertisements is sometimes necessary.

This study is also concerned with the people of the press, who were predominantly men, though women are glimpsed occasionally in subservient roles.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup>Publisher John Ryan's daughters, though not named, were certainly described by naval officer, W.N. Glasscock for their agility as compositors of the *Royal Gazette*. See Whelan, "Journalism in Newfoundland 1807-1832: A Beginning History," 4-5. Also, Harriet J. Ward and Anna Maria Ward, the editor's wife, contributed sketches and poems to the *Morning Post* between 5 June 1860 and 8 December 1860.

a few cases women inherited newspaper proprietorship, but did not become editors.<sup>3</sup>

Women were acknowledged in the newspapers for charitable and voluntary work, and only rarely was it suggested that women might have political influence.<sup>4</sup> The familial structure of the newspaper business and personal nature of journalism in this period are important to political, religious, social, and technological impulses that provide the outline and scope of my thesis. My conclusions are necessarily tentative in opening up this field of study and suggest much work to be done.

One historian, writing in 1923, said that the press was the "most important single source" for the reconstruction of life of the previous three centuries.<sup>5</sup> As a social institution, conducted by community leaders, businessmen, and skilled craftsmen, it was an authority in Newfoundland that claimed the trust and dependence of many. As such, despite its restricted penetration, the study is warranted. In the overall context of

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<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Luterell Winton's name appeared as proprietor in the masthead of the *Public Ledger* following the death of her husband, Henry David Winton, in 1855. Later, Elizabeth Brown Winton became proprietor after her husband, editor Henry Winton Junior died in 1866. See *Public Ledger*, 2 January 1868. Violet Webber, widow of publisher and editor D.C. Webber, was sworn as proprietor of the *Weekly Record and Trinity Bay Advertiser* 3 January 1898. See affidavit, PRL, GN/32/3.

<sup>4</sup>*Courier*, 6 October 1869. Women's campaign for political rights received minimal and negative newspaper coverage even in the twentieth century. See Margot Iris Duley, " 'The Radius of Her Influence for Good': The Rise and Triumph of the Women's Suffrage Movement in Newfoundland 1909-1925," *Pursuing Equality: historical perspectives on women in Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Linda Kealey (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), 1993).

<sup>5</sup>Lucy Maynard Salmon, *The Newspaper and the Historian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), 491.



Newfoundland history, this thesis contributes new information and insight into the everyday life and concerns of a society in the making. The knowledge gained makes a contribution to existing social, religious and political histories of Newfoundland, and to understanding the function of the press, its power, and its limitations.

### 1.3

### A Review of the Literature

The historiography of nineteenth-century journalism and newspaper press in Newfoundland is small. Newfoundland is briefly mentioned in chronological accounts or general surveys of Canadian journalism.<sup>6</sup> The fullest material is biographical, or concerned with individual newspaper editors and publishers, and is found in encyclopedia and periodical articles.<sup>7</sup> Some historians who have used the newspapers in researching other topics, also include information on their sources which is useful to

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<sup>6</sup>Wilfred Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 2, 4. Douglas Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10. Fetherling provides only a single mention of the first newspaper publisher, John Ryan, and the first newspaper, the *Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser*.

<sup>7</sup>For example, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 3, 1991, 410 (P.T. McGrath); 657 (James Murray); Vol. 5, 1994, 128 (James Seaton); Elizabeth Wells, "Joseph Woods," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) Vol. XII, 716; Patrick O'Flaherty, "The Seeds of Reform: Newfoundland, 1800 - 1818" *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23:3, Fall 1988, 39-59; "John Ryan," *DCB*, VII, 763-766; "Henry Winton," *DCB*, VIII, 947-951; Keith Matthews, "The Class of '32: St. John's Reformers on the Eve of Representative Government," *Acadiensis*, 1, 1985, 212-226.

a history of journalism.<sup>8</sup> Many key players in Newfoundland political history had close connections to newspaper editors or proprietors; several newspaper editors were also elected politicians. Their profiles are therefore important to this study.<sup>9</sup> Annotated newspaper directories and bibliographies are invaluable not only for names and dates, but for shifts in ownership and clues to family ties as well as religious and political connections.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, only a few editors/journalists have left behind work, apart

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<sup>8</sup>Examples: Gertrude Gunn, *Political History of Newfoundland 1832-1864* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966); Peter B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation 1864-1867: Politics, Newspapers, and the Union of British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Philip McCann, "Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland 1830-1850", *Religion and Identity*, eds. Terrence Murphy and Cyril Byrne (St. John's: Jesperson Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup>For example, J.K.Hiller, "Philip Little," *DCB*, XIII, 602; Patrick O'Flaherty, "Edward Kielley," *DCB*, VIII, 467-70; Phyllis Creighton, "Edward Troy," *DCB*, X, 687-8; Raymond Lahey, "Michael A. Fleming," *DCB*, VII, 292-300; Frederick Jones, "John T. Mullock," *DCB*, IX, 188-9; Leslie Harris, "Robert John Parsons," *DCB*, XI, 673-674; John Mannion, "Henry Shea," *DCB*, VI, 709-711.

<sup>10</sup>Suzanne Ellison, *Historical Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador Newspapers 1807-1996* (Memorial University of Newfoundland: Queen Elizabeth Library, 1997); Patricia Lockhart Fleming, *Atlantic Canadian Imprints 1801-1820* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Heather Boylan, *Checklist and Historical Directory of Prince Edward Island Newspapers 1787-1986* (Prince Edward Island: Public Archives of Prince Edward Island, 1987); Helen C. Craig, *New Brunswick Newspapers Directory, 1783-1988* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Council of Head Librarians, 1989); Lynn Murphy and Brenda Hicks, *Nova Scotia Newspapers: A Directory and Union List 1752-1998* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University School of Library and Information Studies, 1990).

from their newspapers, that is useful and available,<sup>11</sup> and very little is recorded on the history of printing.<sup>12</sup> These contributions do not add up to a coherent body of work. As well, a paucity of private papers frustrates research so that my main primary sources are the extant newspapers.<sup>13</sup>

Studies of Canadian journalism also provide a slim, but useful index. The first attempt at a critical historiography of Canadian journalism, including newspapers, magazines, memoirs, and essays, was published in 1998.<sup>14</sup> Buxton and McKercher

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<sup>11</sup>Alfred B.Morine, "The Railway Contract, 1898, and afterwards,1883-1933," (St. John's, 1933) Memorial University Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS); James Murray, "The Commercial Crisis in Newfoundland: causes, consequences and cure," St. John's, 1895. The private collection of James Murray's granddaughter, Jean Murray of St. John's, contains some biographical information, scrapbooks of articles by Murray, clipped from newspapers, copies of the *Centenary Magazine* for 1896, 1897, and 1898, and one copy of a single issue of the *Anti-Confederate*, No. 1, 20 May 1895, edited by Murray. Moses Harvey Papers, CNS Archives; Melvin Baker, *Articles by P.T. McGrath* (compiled 1973, CNS).

<sup>12</sup>E.J. Devereux, "Early Printing in Newfoundland," *Dalhousie Review*, 43, 1, 1963-64; W. H. Goodland, "Thirty Years of Journalism," *Trade Review Commercial Annual*, (St. John's), 23 March 1901; reprint, 27 January 1906.

<sup>13</sup>A lack of primary material should not be unexpected, given the massive destruction by fire in St. John's in 1817, 1846, and again in 1892. Publisher John Ryan, for example, relocated several times and reported personal property loss due to fire. In 1846, few publishers escaped serious damage when virtually everything in the trade section of St. John's was destroyed, as it was again in 1892. See Appendix 4, no.1, 339. Historian Stephen Koss noted as well that it was not unusual for journalists to deliberately destroy their private papers in order to protect and maintain sources. See Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; London: Garden House, 1981) 28-29.

<sup>14</sup>William Buxton and Catherine McKercher, "Newspapers, Magazines and Journalism in Canada: Towards a Critical Historiography," *Acadiensis*, XXVIII, 1 (Autumn 1998), 103-126.

noted the dearth of surveys of the development of journalism and the absence of debate on how a history of journalism in Canada might be written, especially compared with the United States where a consistent historiographical debate progresses, and where methods in writing journalism history are continually discussed.<sup>15</sup> The Buxton and McKercher survey is centralist in its perspective, and includes only two direct references to Atlantic Canada, a biography of Joseph Howe by J.M. Beck, and a history of the Halifax *Chronicle Herald and the Mail Star* by William March. Newfoundland is mentioned in a footnote in relation to a shift to a corporate focus by the Toronto *Globe and Mail* and the 'closing' of its bureau in that province.<sup>16</sup> A list of works from French Canada is also included. The authors point out that Quebec's newspaper history scholarship is "on much firmer foundations than its English-Canadian counterpart" because of a comprehensive 10-volume work covering the period 1764 -1975.<sup>17</sup> One of the earliest surveys of printing in Canada was a brief examination of how printing was introduced into Canada, which the

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<sup>15</sup>Buxton and McKercher, 126, n 55.

<sup>16</sup>The *Globe and Mail* has never had a news bureau office in Newfoundland. Its Atlantic office is located in Halifax and is responsible for news coverage of Newfoundland.

<sup>17</sup>André Beaulieu and Jean Hammelin et al., *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours* (Quebec: Presses de l' Université Laval, 1973-1990). See Buxton and McKercher, "Newspapers, Magazines, and Journalism in Canada," 105, n 12.

authors point out was a commissioned work by Montreal paper makers.<sup>18</sup> The labour history of print media receives a brief reference.<sup>19</sup> Omissions by Buxton and McKercher include the work of historians Peter B. Waite, who concentrated on the role and influence of newspapers in the campaign for Confederation between 1864 and 1867,<sup>20</sup> and J.M.S. Careless, who examined the *Toronto Globe*, as well as transatlantic influences in Canadian journalism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Aegidius Fauteaux, *The Introduction of Printing into Canada. A Brief History* (Montreal: Rolland Paper Company, 1930). Other useful sources on printing are: Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Sidney Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Pittsburgh: Colonial Press, 1944; reprint ed., Gloucester, Mass., 1960); *Inland Printer*, (Chicago), December, 1888, 205, 556-558; Patricia Lockhart Fleming, "A Canadian Printer's Apprentice in 1826," *The Devil's Artisan*, 9, 1983, 13-17; Bertha Bassam, *The First Printers and Newspapers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto School of Library Science, 1968); Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1964).

<sup>19</sup>Buxton and McKercher, "Newspapers, Magazines, and Journalism in Canada," 124-125, n 54, cites Gregory Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour Process, and Nineteenth Century Canadian Printers," *Workers and Canadian History* (Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995); David R. Spencer, "Alternative Visions: The Intellectual Heritage of Nonconformist Journalists in Canada," *Newworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File*, eds. Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup>Peter B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation 1864-1867: Politics, Newspapers, and the Union of British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

<sup>21</sup>J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe* 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959, reprint, 1963); J.M.S. Careless, "Mid-Victorian Liberalism in Central Canadian Newspapers, 1850-67," *Canadian Historical Review*, 31, 3, Sept., 1950, 221-236. Careless presented this paper to a conference of the Humanities Research Council of Canada on the "cultural and intellectual development of Central Canada in the nineteenth century" in Kingston, 10 June 1950. These works are useful in constructing

The first attempt at a comprehensive view of Canadian journalism was a detailed narrative by W.H. Kesterton, written over a 16-year period while he was teaching at Carleton University.<sup>22</sup> Nothing more was done in the way of scholarly study until 1978, when a series of essays appeared by Paul Rutherford,<sup>23</sup> culminating in a major work in 1982 on the urban daily newspapers of the late Victorian era.<sup>24</sup> Rutherford's work, which concentrates on the late nineteenth century, is still considered the most important progenitor of analytical scholarship emerging in the 1980s. These works, too, deal only with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>25</sup> Early Canadian work on nineteenth-century journalism comes mainly from writers such as Stewart, Beck, and Jack of the Maritime provinces, the cradle of

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a history of journalism in Newfoundland because they interpret the influence of British middle-class thinking and the transfer of ideas to North America.

<sup>22</sup> Wilfred H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

<sup>23</sup> Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> Examples: Brian P.N. Beaven, "A Last Hurrah: Studies in Liberal Party Development and Ideology in Ontario, 1878-1893" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1981); Minko Sotiron, "From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian English-language Daily Newspapers 1890-1920" (PhD dissertation, Concordia University, 1990); Jean de Bonville, *La Presse Québécoise De 1884 À 1914 Genèse d'un média de masse* (Quebec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1988); Thomas Laurence Walkom, "The Daily Newspaper Industry in Ontario's Developing Capitalist Industry 1871-1911" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983).

Canadian journalism.<sup>26</sup> Later contributions by D.C. Harvey may be found in historical anthologies and journals.<sup>27</sup>

American scholarship in journalism history has been far more prolific, starting with a history of printing published in 1810, which is still a valuable reference.<sup>28</sup> The most recent annotated bibliography of American journalism history, published in 1989, lists more than 200 books and thousands of journal articles.<sup>29</sup> The bulk of scholarly work on the subject of journalism in North America, as well as in Europe emanates from the United States.<sup>30</sup>

British historians such as Peter Burroughs and William Wickwar have paid special attention to the influences of journalism in the nineteenth century. Burroughs,

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<sup>26</sup>J.J. Stewart, "Early Journalism in Nova Scotia," *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections* 6, Halifax, 1887-88; David Russell Jack, "Early Journalism in New Brunswick," *Acadiensis*, 8:4, 1908; J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Voice of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964).

<sup>27</sup>D.C. Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia," *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces*, ed. George Rawlyk (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967); D.C. Harvey, "Newspapers of Nova Scotia, 1840-1867," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 26, 1987.

<sup>28</sup>Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, (Worcester, Mass., 1810; reprint ed., New York: Weathervane Books, 1970). Other standard works include: Frederick Hudson, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1873); Frank Luther Mott, *The News in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

<sup>29</sup>William David Sloan, *American Journalism History: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

<sup>30</sup>Two American journals in particular, *Journalism Quarterly* and *Journalism History*, are sources of much required reading in Canadian journalism schools.

for example, makes extensive use of the "reform press" to illustrate changes occurring in the Empire which caused problems in British-Canadian relations between 1830 and 1849. Much of this work illuminates a connection between the *Colonial Gazette* in London and various newspapers in Newfoundland.<sup>31</sup> Also, James Barnes and Patience Barnes have uncovered an obscure pro-British newspaper published in Boston in 1855, subsidized indirectly by the British government, which also illustrates the intimacy between politics and journalism, and at the same time reveals connections to Newfoundland journalists.<sup>32</sup>

Few historical works exist that examine the subject of poverty in newspapers of the nineteenth century. One exception is an analysis by Eileen Yeo and E.P. Thompson of journalist, Henry Mayhew, who wrote extensively about London's poor

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<sup>31</sup>Peter Burroughs, *The Colonial Reformers and Canada 1830-1849* (Toronto; Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1969). Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, and London, 1981), discusses the power relations of press and politics and the influences of each on the other. Koss also provides a portrait of Alfred Harmsworth (Viscount Northcliffe), useful because of his connections to Newfoundland. Other helpful sources include Michael Harris and Alan Lee, eds., *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), an examination of the growth of daily newspapers. Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1985), offers much insight into the production of newspapers in the nineteenth century, and provides clues to the writing of newspaper history.

<sup>32</sup>James J Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, "A British Venture into North American Journalism: The *Anglo Saxon*, 1855-57," *Canadian Review of American Studies* (Summer, 1987), 197-208.



in 1849-50.<sup>33</sup> Patricia Hollis's examination of a labour press in Britain in the 1830s offers insight into the utility of newspapers.<sup>34</sup> David R. Spencer's study of a labour press in English Canada traces its origins to the 1870s.<sup>35</sup> Fewer still consider the role of the press in the temperance movement. Works by British and Irish historians, Brian Harrison and Colm Kerrigan are beneficial.<sup>36</sup> Current scholarship continues to provide new insights into the people and workings of the newspaper press of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Eileen Yeo and E.P. Thompson, *The Unknown Mayhew* (London: Merlin Press, 1971; New York: Schocken Books, 1972).

<sup>34</sup>Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working Class Radicalism of the 1830s* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>35</sup>David R. Spencer, "Alternate Vision: Main Themes in Moral Education in Canada's English-Language Working-Class Press, 1870-1910," (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1990).

<sup>36</sup>Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1971); Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815 - 1872*, 2nd edition, (Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1994); Brian Harrison, " 'A World Of Which We Have No Conception' Liberalism and the English Temperance Press: 1830-1872," *Victorian Studies*, 1969, 125-158; Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement 1838 - 1849* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992).

<sup>37</sup>For example, Leonora Nattress, *William Cobbett: The Politics of Style* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledge: Journalism, Gender, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship Under Charles II* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford : Clarendon Press; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); Dean de la Motte and Jeannene M.

## 1.4

## Method

The main problem encountered in beginning to research the newspapers published from 1832 to the end of the century was the large number of titles -- about 85 in all -- weeklies, bi-weeklies, tri-weeklies and later dailies, and the vast amount and variety of material to read. It was therefore necessary to select a manageable number of sufficient importance or influence that would constitute an analytical narrative with some continuity for that period of time. This selection was also made with the view to provide a perspective on specific influences that created an overall pattern of development. The criteria for selecting particular newspapers were based on stability in the market over a period of at least ten years or more, and the demonstrable authority of their publishers and editors. Some obscure and short-lived newspapers are also included and are important for defining a particular bias, or connection with a movement, political party, religion, or other newspapers. Their failure to survive is also important in a history of journalism and sometimes provides clues to why longer-established newspapers were successful. The process of selection was aided by referral to Ellison's annotated newspaper directory, and various citations

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Przyblyski, eds., *Making the News: Modernity & the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Urlrike H. Meinhof and Kay Richardson, eds., *Text, Discourse and Context: Representations of Poverty in Britain* (London and New York: Longman, 1994); Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennen, eds., *News Workers: Toward A History of Rank and File*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy Communication Politics In Dubious Times* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

made by historians of nineteenth-century Newfoundland.<sup>38</sup> In order to compensate for the many issues missing in some runs of newspapers, gaps as much as 10 years for certain newspapers, I relied in some cases on references to the missing issues in contemporary newspapers of approximately the same dates. This was more time-consuming where the writing style was allusive, which was frequent, resulting in even more inconclusively derived evidence.

Devising a method of approach was further hampered by a lack of information about how newspapers operated. Newspaper work included the gathering, writing, selecting, setting, and turning out of the final product, completed in some cases, by the editor himself, or with minimal assistance. Such dedication suggests men of some education and skilled training, but also men of passion and commitment. It is noted that men occupied the career of "public journalist," as they termed themselves. Only very seldom were women glimpsed as adjuncts to the trade, which in Newfoundland, meant they were part of a family-operated newspaper business. Affidavits were legally required for registration of newspapers and provided information on ownership, but those prior to 1877 are not extant. Those available after that date are incomplete. With the exception of two extremely rare finds -- the correspondence of A.A. Parsons and

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<sup>38</sup>Suzanne Ellison, *Historical Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador Newspapers 1806-1996* (St. John's: Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997). Several Newfoundland historians have made extensive use of the nineteenth-century newspapers, most of whom are cited throughout the thesis.

Moses Harvey with William Whiteway and Robert Bond,<sup>39</sup> -- no personal papers, relative to behind-the scenes interplay, were located. No private papers nor business records remain for any of the newspaper proprietorships; costs and revenues are not recorded anywhere in a systematic way; and methods of distribution and circulation figures are not known with any certainty.

Editorial bias was expected in the century recognized for the individualistic nature of the newspaper press and its personalized journalism. However, biographical information, useful for interpreting bias, is available on only a very few editors and publishers, an area of research which needs redressing. Moreover, some newspapers did not record the name of the editor; in others the reader was led to believe editorials were written by someone other than the editor whose name was listed in the newspaper. Anonymity was customary, posing a general research problem. Letters to the editor, with few exceptions, were signed pseudonymously. Every effort was made to recognize clues to sources, but these historical conventions make authenticity in the press almost impossible to establish.

This thesis explores the themes of religion, temperance, and poverty due to their prevalence as local issues which overlapped in time and were intricately connected. For example, religion was laden with sectarian or denominational tensions dividing society, yet it was also the source of the temperance movement which had a

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<sup>39</sup>Robert Bond Collection 237, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

unifying social effect. Poverty, an almost constant issue of political debate, was inextricably bound up in religious and temperance discourse as well. However, in order to clarify and elucidate these complexities through the decades, it was necessary to treat each separately. These issues also involved politics in a variety of ways, but the singular issue of Confederation shifted the political emphasis from a particularly local to a more national focus requiring special attention. Finally, in tracing press development to the end of the century, I considered the response made by the press in the last two decades to technological advances made at the time.

Extant newspapers were the main source of information for this study. Government and church documents, and private collections of personal papers provided some new and obscure material cited in this thesis. The interpretive framework also draws on the work of succeeding generations of historians in which new insights and methods of inquiry have been employed. For example, early media histories were linked to ideas of freedom and progress. Freedom from government restraint to publish was understood as progress. Freedom of speech and expressed opinion, including criticism of government and other authority, was thought to lead to a more democratic society. More efficient gathering and reporting of information made possible by technology and commerce, too, supposedly promoted democracy. At the same time, the press, as an institution, generally supported church and state in upholding laws and maintaining the status quo.

Freedom and progress were germane to various interpretations which

emphasized nationalist, romantic, and developmental (professional and technological) trends. Publishers and editors who claimed they stood for democracy against wealth and power were also cast in the light of freedom and progress. All of these theoretical approaches presented media communication as an external force for good upon society, or as reflecting society. More recent interpretations of communications and journalism history are neither liberal nor conservative in terms of freedom and progress, but cultural, suggesting that the press and journalism function as instruments of social interaction. They are both a product of the society in which they are produced, and at the same time, help to produce that society. In other words, journalism not only reflects society, but tends, in a variety of ways, to shape and control society.<sup>40</sup>

This study combines these approaches, taking into account interpretations of the nineteenth-century newspaper press as a symbol of freedom, progress, and democracy, but also striving toward a cultural interpretation which is necessarily critical in its approach. In seeking a balance between individual personalities and broader influences, I have tried to analyze the cultural role of newspaper journalism in its specific Newfoundland historical context to show that it not only reflected that society but helped to create it.

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<sup>40</sup>Interpretations of journalism history are discussed in the works of historians and sociologists such as Robert Park, Bernard Bailyn, Sydney Kobre, James Carey, all of whom are cited in this study.

## 1.5

## Organization

Following the introduction, the thesis is outlined in an overview, and each chapter that follows is part of a chronological, interrelated narrative. Thus, chapters three, four, and five discuss early cultural aspects of religion, temperance, and poverty in relation to society and the press in the period from the 1830s to the 1860s. Chapter six examines the political nature of the press focusing on the issue of Confederation. This chapter includes a background of press interest in the subject prior to the 1860s and its role in the debate up to 1869. This event of national proportion is notable for the absence of the parochial in local newspaper discourse around the issue. Chapters seven and eight discuss technological advances that began elsewhere in the 1830s, and examine them in the context of their impact for the press in Newfoundland toward the end of the century when a permanent shift to daily newspapers and a new outport press take place. Chapter nine summarizes the findings in each of the preceding chapters, presents the tentative conclusions arrived at, and suggests areas for further research and study.

Brief profiles of all daily publications are included in appendices. Charts and tables depicting the titles of newspapers, names of owners and editors, and relevant network connections, as well as their political status throughout the century, are also included. Maps illustrate events important to the discussion. These illustrations are all arranged in appendices at the end of the thesis.

## Chapter Two:

## Overview

## 2.1

## Introduction

Historians agree that in a North American context, Newfoundland's past is unique, mainly because of its connection, from at least the sixteenth century, to an international migratory fishery directed by English/British mercantile interests which initially had little need for colonization. Settlement in Newfoundland dates from the seventeenth century. Planned colonies established by the English proved unsuccessful for the most part, and the population grew slowly and informally, and without official encouragement.

The planters scattered along the coastline, their locations dictated by access to codfish, the island's staple product, and to such necessities as wood and water. In time, sealing, and seal oil exports encouraged settlers to extend their range onto the northeast coast. Anglo-French treaties affecting fishing rights on the north and west coasts of the island separated that area in almost every way from the bulk of a growing population clustered in and around the Avalon Peninsula and northeast coast. This was a fishing society, and until late in the nineteenth century other resources -- minerals and the forests -- were under-exploited. In this period, agriculture was never more than a subsistence activity.

In each region of the island, mercantile and administrative centres emerged,



each with a hinterland of small fishing settlements. The largest of these centres were on the Avalon Peninsula -- Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Brigus in Conception Bay, and St. John's, which became the capital of Newfoundland in the eighteenth century. This small, ramshackle and unattractive town was, by the early nineteenth century, the dominant metropolis, the administrative, political, and military centre of the emerging colony. Not surprisingly, it was here that a newspaper press was first established.

The rural-urban divide was one feature of Newfoundland society; another was the stark class division between a small mercantile and professional elite, and the mass of labouring population. It would be a mistake to think of the working class -- if one can use that term -- as uniformly poverty-stricken and subject to relentless economic exploitation. Nevertheless, many Newfoundlanders lived hard and precarious lives, and in mid-century were largely illiterate. Thus the press was necessarily urban, and its readership limited.

In the early 1800s, an influx of unskilled immigrants to the fishery from southeast Ireland and western England tripled the population of the island to about 60,000; in 1874 that number increased to about 160,000. At the end of the century, despite attempts at diversification, the population of the colony, including Labrador was still only about 200,000,<sup>1</sup> one-third of whom were illiterate.<sup>2</sup> Trade and commerce

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<sup>1</sup>*Census of Newfoundland* 1901, 448; *Census of Newfoundland and Labrador* 1884, 204, showing 1874 figures.

<sup>2</sup>Literacy statistics are approximate, but variously evaluated as extremely low during the nineteenth century.

remained of prime interest to the dominant class, with extremely little investment in education, municipal government, or social development. The most urbanized centres were themselves studies in dichotomy, with fine residences of the elite removed from tenement row housing and rickety abodes, where in formative years pigs were said to run loose in narrow streets strewn with fish offal. Even late in the century St. John's was poorly laid out, and just beginning to acquire sanitation and lighting.

These conditions perpetuated what Alexander described for Newfoundland as a "sluggish intellectual life and an unimaginative and inefficient debate about the goals of society ...",<sup>3</sup> further plagued by divisive religious tensions, despite having achieved a measure of local autonomy in 1832. However, during the century social conditions improved, literacy increased, and new technologies encouraged industry and new markets for newspapers remote from St. John's.

It was in this setting that a newspaper press developed in Newfoundland through the nineteenth century to serve, either by choice or necessity, mainly the mercantile and political elite, under the jaundiced eye of church and state, which, in their turn, and with the concurrence of publishers and editors, also used the press to their advantage. It is with these complex relationships that this thesis is concerned.

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<sup>3</sup>David G. Alexander, "Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Newfoundland," *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: essays in Canadian Political Economy*, D.G. Alexander, compiled by Eric W. Sager, Lewis R. Fischer, Stuart O. Pierson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983), 115.

## 2.2

## A Newspaper Press Established

For centuries, migratory naval governors administered the affairs of the island, concerned primarily with the security of fishing activity in surrounding waters and remote outposts. After several attempts at permanent settlement, it was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the seaports of St. John's and Conception Bay towns on the Avalon Peninsula became centres of international fish trade. It was here that the largest resident population lived and where a merchant class dominated a society in its early stages of formal organization.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century a post office, charitable associations, schools, and a magisterial judicial system became established. As part of that social organization, and as a benefit to trade, in 1806 merchants in St. John's suggested to the governor of the day that a newspaper be established in the town. The request was granted under strict conditions that nothing could be published which would, in the opinion of the governor, or his appointed magistrate, criticize authorities, agitate inhabitants, or disturb the peace.

## 2.3

The Early Press 1806 - 1832<sup>4</sup>

The Water Street merchants in St. John's recommended John Ryan, a United

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<sup>4</sup>For a detailed discussion of this period of press development see Whelan, "Journalism in Newfoundland: A Beginning History."

Empire Loyalist then operating two newspapers in New Brunswick, as their choice to start a newspaper. Governor Erasmus Gower granted a licence to establish a printing office and publish a newspaper in St. John's to Ryan on 22 September 1806,<sup>5</sup> who published the first newspaper, the *Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser* on 27 August 1807. Ryan's permit restricted the location of the print shop so that it did not interfere with the fish trade conducted near the harbour. To prevent the publication of anything offensive to the authorities, or disturbing to the peace, each number of the newspaper required approval from the governor or his appointed magistrates. Ryan was also required to print his name "at the foot" of each newspaper and to post a bond of £200 sterling. Newfoundland at this time did not have colonial status, and restrictions on publishing came directly from the naval governor who applied the rules he believed to be in force in England. There is no evidence to show that inspection prior to publication, or censorship, was strictly enforced.<sup>6</sup>

Ryan, a native of Newport, Rhode Island, was a Loyalist publisher in New York when that city was evacuated in 1783. Having fled to New Brunswick with his printing press, he ran into trouble with officials following critical comments in his

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<sup>5</sup>PANL, GN 2/1/A/17-19, 63-64.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. All issues of the *Royal Gazette* for the first three years, 1807, 1808, and 1809 are missing. It is unlikely Ryan would have complained about restrictions in his newspaper, but in correspondence with the governor when he faced competition, he described the conditions under which he had operated as oppressive. See PANL GN/2/1/A/20, 251; GN2/1/A/25, 45-47. Ryan and successive publishers to the present day have complied with the requirement to have the name of the printer and publisher included in each issue, and a copy of each issue reserved for government officials.

newspaper regarding delays in land distribution for Loyalists. While attempting to set up a family newspaper business in Saint John and Fredericton, Ryan also accepted the invitation from St. John's merchants under the impression that town could sustain only one newspaper, affording him the monopoly he was seeking. In Newfoundland, he avoided confrontation, bowing to all demands of the governor of the day. Ryan was either unaware of, or chose to ignore, the fact that the governor had no jurisdiction to withhold a licence. Under William III, a licensing act had provided for inspection of printed material prior to publication, and the right to refuse permission to publish; but the law expired in 1695 receiving little public attention.<sup>7</sup>

Ryan assumed for himself the title of King's Printer, and agreed to publish all government notices and proclamations, refraining from critical comment on either the government of Great Britain or on His Majesty's subjects. Believing that he held a monopoly on printing, Ryan was later perturbed to discover that two young printers, Alexander Haire and Donald Lee, whom it is likely Ryan had trained, obtained a licence to publish their own newspaper, the *Mercantile Journal*. First issued in 1814, it marked the beginning of a sanctioned free press in Newfoundland.<sup>8</sup> By this time the naval governor in St. John's, Richard G. Keats, had reluctantly acknowledged that he

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<sup>7</sup>See William Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press 1819-1832* (London: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1928; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1972), 14-18. For discussion of this law see also, Sydney Kobre, *Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1944, 1960), 29.

<sup>8</sup>The first two years of the *Mercantile Journal* are not extant. It ceased publication in 1827.

was powerless to prevent the publication of newspapers, which, he said, seemed "to settle the unrestrained Freedom of the Press in Newfoundland..."<sup>9</sup> Later, in 1821, in the case of *Jennings and Long versus Beard*, Chief Justice Francis Forbes ruled that governors had never possessed legislative powers, rendering proclamations, including restraints on printers, invalid.<sup>10</sup>

A free press therefore evolved in Newfoundland through three distinct stages: a commercial enterprise controlled to some extent by the governor; a competitive publishing industry concerned with survival, ethics and libel laws; and an emerging social institution tending to shape public opinion based mainly on religious and political views. The market, which Ryan had enjoyed alone for seven years, was then open to all who had the means to print, though under the watchful eyes of local authorities guided by the English common law of criminal libel which included blasphemy, obscenity, defamation and sedition. Freedom to publish did not preclude publishers from prosecution for anything circulated that might lead to social unrest.

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<sup>9</sup>Governor Keats to Lord Bathurst of the Colonial Office in London, PANL, GN 2/1/A/26, 50-51; 112-113.

<sup>10</sup>John Manning Ward, *Colonial Self-Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 126. The *Royal Gazette* was made the official gazette of the Government of Newfoundland under term 4 of the amended Crown Lands Act, 22 April 1884. See *Twillingate Sun*, 18 October 1884. No evidence was located that John Ryan was ever officially appointed King's Printer. His successors continued to have the title and produced government printing under commercial contract until 1980. In that year, David Dawe, who, like his predecessors, had had the title, was officially appointed Queen's Printer. Since that time the Queen's Printer is an employee of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Nevertheless, Ryan, a veteran printer with 30 years experience in neighbouring colonies, had proved the usefulness of a press to the mercantile trade in Newfoundland. A printing press answered the need for supplies of handbills, notices, promissory notes, and the like. A newspaper was a logical addition desired by merchants who saw themselves involved in and part of the wider world.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, a new political awareness grew among the relatively small elite of St. John's.

In 1812, a letter to the British Parliament from Dr. William Carson, an immigrant Scot in Newfoundland, criticized the naval governors, deplored the primitive conditions of the colony, and called for local representative government. The letter, published in pamphlet form, and circulated in London, was the beginning of political change in the colony. In 1824, three hundred years after the island was claimed by Britain, and more than one hundred years after British sovereignty was

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<sup>11</sup>The first Newfoundland legislation pertaining to newspapers and books was passed 6 May 1836, (6 Wm. IV), "An Act for preventing the mischiefs arising from the printing and publishing books, newspapers, and papers of a like nature, by persons unknown, and to regulate the printing and publishing the same." See Newfoundland Acts 1833-45, Department of Justice, Government of Newfoundland. A consolidation of Newfoundland statutes took place in 1916 and a revision in 1952 respecting newspapers and books retained the requirement for sworn affidavits from individuals or companies naming principals and directors prior to publication. Publishers continued to be required to include the name of the printer and to deliver a signed copy of each issue to the ministry with notification about any change of address and a description of the building in which the newspaper was printed. The principals of the company were held jointly and severally liable for the publication of any libel contained in the newspaper. The penalty for non-compliance was \$500, or three months in prison with provision for appeal. These statutes were revised and consolidated in 1970, with the word 'libel' changed to 'defamation.' Consolidation and revision occurred again in 1992 retaining previous provisions and changing the jurisdiction for newspapers and books from Municipal and Provincial Affairs to the Department of Tourism and Culture.

settled by the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, Newfoundland was officially recognized as a colony. In 1832, after twenty years of agitation by a handful of reformers, Newfoundland was granted local representative government, co-incidental with parliamentary reform in Britain. It is noteworthy that the campaign for local government was waged most vigorously by pamphleteers who were middle class immigrants to Newfoundland, not by newspaper editors.

A third newspaper, the *Newfoundland Sentinel and General Commercial Register*, published sometime in 1818, was edited by Lewis Kelly Ryan, the son of printer John Ryan. The *Mercantile Journal* and the *Newfoundland Sentinel*, in contrast to the *Royal Gazette*, introduced a more titillating journalism, but were run by inexperienced and politically naive young men. Lee of the *Mercantile Journal* and L.K. Ryan of the *Sentinel* carried on a youthful irreverent editorial banter between 1818 and 1821 despite scrutiny by authorities who barely tolerated them and saw them as a threat to social order.<sup>12</sup>

These two newspapers were relatively short-lived and certainly surpassed by the arrival of a fourth newspaper, the *Public Ledger and Newfoundland General Advertiser*, in 1820. It was published by Henry David Winton and printed by Alexander Haire who had dissolved his partnership with Lee. The son of a

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<sup>12</sup>Only one copy of one issue of the *Newfoundland Sentinel* is extant. Evidence suggests that it ceased publication in 1821 when its editor appears to have left Newfoundland rather than face charges of libel. What is known about the content of the *Sentinel* is seen in the editorials of the *Mercantile Journal*. For a detailed discussion see Whelan, "Journalism in Newfoundland: A Beginning History."



Congregational clergyman, Winton was a native of Kent, England who had apprenticed to a Dartmouth printer and bookbinder, and later worked in the trade in London. He came to St. John's in 1818 to set up a stationer's shop.<sup>13</sup> The first six years of the *Public Ledger* are not extant, but it is clear that from 1827 onward, Winton was in favour of law and order, and decidedly against the involvement of any church in the business of the state. In a community where the relationship between Catholics and Protestants became progressively strained over the next three decades, Winton and the *Public Ledger* were constantly at the centre of controversy. A fearless journalist, he was the first editor in Newfoundland to declare his newspaper a "public organ of expression."<sup>14</sup> But Winton remained a champion of law and order, not of the poor, nor of fishermen whom he described as "lawless" in their public demonstrations against the truck system.<sup>15</sup>

In 1827, a fifth newspaper, the *Newfoundlander*, was published in St. John's amid the agitation for representative government, though it contributed little to the debate in its first few years. The publisher and editor was John Shea, son of Henry Shea, a well-respected Irish Catholic merchant in St. John's who was close to the

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<sup>13</sup>Patrick O'Flaherty, "Winton, Henry" *DCB*, VIII, 947-951.

<sup>14</sup>*Public Ledger*, 21 December 1827.

<sup>15</sup>"Truck" was the merchant system of payment in supplies, instead of cash, to fishermen for their catch.

Catholic clergy and personally involved in church affairs.<sup>16</sup> Shea's initial pledge was not to mix religion and politics. But as so often with rhetorical promises of nineteenth-century editors, circumstances altered policies. The campaign for local government gave rise to the need for public debate. Both Winton of the *Public Ledger* and John Shea of the *Newfoundlander* promoted the idea for a local legislature. Prior to its establishment in 1832, a discussion about the constitutional makeup of a legislative assembly set the two editors at odds.<sup>17</sup> Shea argued that representation would reflect the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Winton despaired of representation based on those differences, and withdrew support, saying that Newfoundland was not ready for so-called self government.<sup>18</sup>

His action was seen as anti-Catholic bigotry by Shea, and by John Kent, an Irish Catholic candidate in the first general election, and future brother-in-law of the Catholic bishop Michael Anthony Fleming. In a rebuttal to Winton's conclusion that he was involved in Kent's campaign, Fleming wrote a letter to the *Newfoundlander* stating

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<sup>16</sup>See John Mannion, "Shea, Henry" *DCB*, V, 1966, 709-711.

<sup>17</sup>Bannister has argued that the editors of the *Newfoundlander* and the *Public Ledger* in 1828-29 were in agreement about the need for a local legislature, but he also noted that their unity of purpose was short-lived. See Jerry Bannister, "The Campaign for Representative Government in Newfoundland," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 1994, 19-40.

<sup>18</sup>*Public Ledger*, 7 September 1832.

that it was not only his right, but his political duty as a citizen.<sup>19</sup> Adding to the turmoil, Fleming also supported Protestant candidates Dr. William Carson and William Thomas, creating factions within the Catholic population of St. John's. The political life of Newfoundland had begun in an atmosphere of religious tension in which the press became embroiled from the start. The tone was set by the *Newfoundlander* and the *Public Ledger* which directed the course of press coverage of Newfoundland affairs along ethnic and sectarian lines for decades to come.<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.4

#### Phase Two: 1832-1850s

The establishment of a local legislature created the potential for protracted debate, a fact not lost on publishers and editors who needed to sell newspapers, or to further their own political ambitions. The time was advantageous for newspaper expansion, at least in the St. John's market where most of the excitement was generated in a population of about 12,000. Nearby towns in Conception Bay, with a combined population double that of St. John's, were, as Shea pointed out, a "fair rival to the capital" in trade<sup>21</sup> and were ready for their own newspapers. W.S. Comer, a stationer in Harbour Grace, had started the *Conception Bay Mercury* in 1829. Apart

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<sup>19</sup>Letters to the editor by John Kent and Bishop Fleming in the *Newfoundlander*, 13 September 1832; 20 September 1832.

<sup>20</sup>Whelan, "Journalism in Newfoundland: A Beginning History," 95-127.

<sup>21</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 27 October 1830.

from condoning a riot by fishermen in Harbour Grace in 1832, which drew the ire of Winton, the *Mercury* was not controversial and remained in the market only until 1834.<sup>22</sup> Changes occurred in the 1830s bringing a shift in emphasis and a number of new newspapers to the market.

Henry Shea, possibly Bishop Fleming's strongest connection to the *Newfoundlander*, died in 1830. Editor and publisher, John Shea left Newfoundland in 1837 to live in Ireland. Like his brothers who replaced him on the newspaper, he may have found the political religious squabbling distasteful. Certainly the *Newfoundlander* adopted a more reserved posture under the direction of E.D. Shea and Ambrose Shea whose personal political aspirations were carefully nurtured through the entire 57-year span of the newspaper, which remained a weekly to its end in 1884.

The next important newspaper in St. John's, the *Newfoundland Patriot* appeared in 1833, published by Dr. William Carson with Robert J. Parsons, who was also the editor. Parsons had worked as a printer for Henry Winton, an embittered relationship that left the two arch editorial enemies. Parsons, who also became a member of the House of Assembly, was in large part responsible for the ever increasing political and religious tensions that kept the press in a state of agitation through several decades. Editorial debate was lively, often boisterous, and sometimes violent, usually with merchants and clergy at the centre of controversy.

In 1833 John Thomas Burton began a publishing career in Carbonear in

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<sup>22</sup>Only issues of the *Conception Bay Mercury* for 1829 and 1834 are extant.

partnership with a private school teacher, D.E. Gilmour. Burton took over the *Star and Conception Bay Journal* from Gilmour in 1834, then moved to St. John's in 1840 to start the *Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, and the *Newfoundland Express* in 1851 with James Seaton. Burton went on to publish the *Telegraph and Political Review* in 1856, and the *Comet* in 1869 specifically aimed against Confederation. Burton's considerable influence in the newspaper market lasted until 1875.

It was also in 1833 that public drunkenness became a press issue of social reform, possibly connected with political reform and the establishment of local government. First broached in letters to the editor of the *Times and General Commercial Gazette*, founded in St. John's by J.W. McCoubrey in 1832, temperance was a topic of interest in most of the newspapers. It reached great intensity in the *Weekly Herald and Conception Bay General Advertiser*, started by William Charles St. John, a temperance organizer in Harbour Grace, in 1842. St. John made the issue of temperance a newspaper crusade that lasted long after he shut down the *Herald* and left Newfoundland for Boston in 1854. The *Morning Courier* entered the market in St. John's in 1844 as a "neutral" journal, but after 1846, under the direction of Wesleyan Joseph Woods, adopted various political positions in support of Methodist interests.

By the mid 1850s, when Newfoundland was granted responsible government, the newspaper market was well-established. The *Newfoundlander*, *Public Ledger*, *Patriot*, *Times*, *Telegraph*, and *Courier* were all strong, and run by individualistic editors, Shea, Winton, Parsons (R.J.), McCoubrey, Burton and Woods. Over that time,

despite the increase in the number of newspapers to 21, little had changed in the market, which remained geographically confined within the Avalon Peninsula.

The political changes that brought responsible government in 1855 had also brought about compromises that reconciled Catholics and Protestants, so that a somewhat more inclusive atmosphere prevailed, and the economic future of Newfoundland generally received greater attention. The 1860s was a period of depression in the fisheries, but also a period of political transition. While new inventions such as the telegraph and steam locomotion held out promises of industrial diversity and prosperity, Newfoundland was drawn more intimately into defining its own future as part of a Canadian federation or as an independent country.

## 2.5

### Phase Three: 1860s

In 1860 the population of the colony had reached only about 140,000. Fewer than 25,000 people lived in the capital, St. John's, one-quarter of whom lived in poverty.<sup>23</sup> Conditions were not conducive to expanding the newspaper market. However, a distinct shift in emphasis occurred in the 1860s relative to two separate national and international issues, relegating local peculiarities to the sidelines. The Atlantic telegraph cable connection inspired the first attempt at daily newspaper production in 1860, the extension of W.J. Ward's bi-weekly *Morning Post and*

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<sup>23</sup>See Melvin Baker, "The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland 1800-1921," (PhD dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1980), 177-225.

*Shipping Gazette*, but this experiment ended within a short time. As a private monopoly in Newfoundland, the telegraph was to be no incentive to publishers of weekly newspapers to go daily. Nor did the telegraph expand quickly; it took about 30 years before land lines traversed rough undeveloped terrain to remote areas of the island. Newfoundland's role in extending electric telegraph communication in North America and Europe attracted world media attention, but had virtually no immediate social impact in Newfoundland.

Telegraphy was important and newsworthy, but editors and politicians were preoccupied in the mid-1860s with overwhelming poverty, the lack of resources outside an unpredictable fishery, and the debate over whether union with Canada might solve Newfoundland's problems. That debate led to a more successful attempt at daily publication, Francis Winton's *Morning Chronicle*, financed by St. John's merchant, C.F. Bennett for the purpose of defeating Confederation in 1869 and for a few years following. A single last-minute effort to gain support for union, Burton's *Comet*, disappeared shortly after the 1869 election campaign.

These events in the 1860s bridged the growth of the press from its cultural concerns with religion, temperance and poverty to political and economic concerns with industrial development and railway-building. This period of transition led to the final phase of press development from the 1870s to the end of the century.

In the last three decades of the century a permanent daily press was established in Newfoundland. In order to maintain one or more daily newspapers, what was needed was a relatively large and growing population, the extension of literacy along with educational opportunity, urbanization, and various forms of social and political organization.<sup>24</sup> These criteria describe a world view that included British North America in general, and Newfoundland to a lesser extent. St. John's, Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Brigus were the only towns with attributes of urbanity, and even there, despite their concentrated population, literacy levels were not high.<sup>25</sup> Literacy alone, however, does not determine the utility of newspapers.<sup>26</sup>

St. John's was not only the seat of government on which newspapers depended for printing contracts and advertising revenue, it was also the main centre of trade and commerce.<sup>27</sup> Its leading citizens were merchants, many of whom owned a variety of

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<sup>24</sup>See Michael Harris and Alan Lee, eds., *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), Introduction, 107; Robert Desmond, *The Information Process: World Reporting to the 20th Century* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1978), 132, 169, 211.

<sup>25</sup>David G. Alexander, "Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Newfoundland," *Acadiensis*, 1, 10, (Autumn 1980), 3-34.

<sup>26</sup>Williams found that throughout the nineteenth century, the numbers of people who bought or read newspapers were far below the numbers of people who were able to read. See Raymond Williams, "The press and popular culture: an historical perspective," *Newspaper history: from the 17th century to the present day*, eds. George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate, (London: Constable; Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1978), 41-50.

<sup>27</sup>Records of advertising revenue for Newfoundland newspapers do not exist. Rough calculations could be made by extensive research through the numerous



vessels, or were agents for others. Some were engaged in coastal and foreign trade, marine insurance, and banking. Others invested in distilleries and the manufacture of flour, ropes and twines, or traded in wholesale and retail products. All looked to the sea for every need, including information about what was happening abroad, politically as well as commercially. It was primarily for these reasons that merchants had initiated a newspaper press and largely sustained it. The early weeklies, out of their own need to survive, had shared this small market by publishing on alternate days, so that altogether, it can be argued, they provided commercial interests with daily news and advertising. Once the more modern steam-driven cylindrical presses became financially feasible in the late 1870s and early 1880s, a few publishers made the change to daily production. By then most of the pioneer publishers were nearing retirement, had died, or had left Newfoundland.

For many years the ideas of wealthy businessman and politician C.F. Bennett, suggesting how the colony could advance on its own with a system of roads and steam communications, were expounded in several newspapers. His influence in the press was significant. In the midst of heightened interest in Confederation in the 1860s, Bennett saw the press, but specifically a daily press, as the most effective means to discredit the concept and help him win the 1869 election. Once that was accomplished, he faded from the political scene within a few years, but he had introduced a modern,

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volumes of advertising columns of the newspapers, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

attractive daily newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, forerunner to the major successful daily newspapers of the 1870s, and 1880s, and 1890s, namely, the *Evening Telegram*, the *Evening Mercury/Herald*, and the *Daily News*. Their arrival in the St. John's market coincided with political interest in railway development. The editors, Alexander Parsons, Moses Harvey, Albert Morine, and P.T. McGrath, all politically partisan, played an important role in a railway debate that sustained daily newspapers and lasted beyond the end of the century.

The rhetoric of "railway mania", which had gripped British North America in the 1850s and 1860s, caught Newfoundland in its wake. Interest in science and technology was keen among the elite. Reports of railway development throughout the world appeared routinely in the Newfoundland press beginning in the 1840s, in extracts from newspapers in neighbouring colonies and elsewhere, or in local editorials. The transportation revolution that sparked Nova Scotia's interest in an intercolonial railway was boosted passionately by its most ardent promoter, Joseph Howe, owner and editor of the *Novascotian*, whose public letters were carried in Newfoundland newspapers.<sup>28</sup> The perception of a railway as key to opening up the country for the development of agriculture, timber, and minerals, was strong in the

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<sup>28</sup>A.A. den Otter discusses in detail, in his comprehensive study of railway development in Canada, Howe's editorial influence in elevating the concept of a nation state made possible by a communications system of railroads, telegraphs, and steamboats. He also notes that Newfoundland did not envision itself as part of that system until very late in the century. See A.A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The Transcontinental Railway Idea in British North America*, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

1860s, and tied into the debate about union with Canada which was also seen by some as the solution to poverty in Newfoundland.<sup>29</sup> However, roads and steamers continued to take precedence over a railway for two more decades. Even then, St. John's merchants who opposed a railway saw it not only as a tax burden, but also as an invitation to outside competitors and a loss of coastal trade.<sup>30</sup>

In all of the newspaper discussion about industrial expansion as an alternative to a precarious fishery, expansion of the newspaper market itself was not considered. In the absence of circulation records, it is impossible to know, but fair to say that the market remained relatively static within the Avalon Peninsula, and relied on ocean-going vessels to the end of the century. Outside of that market, both the *Weekly Record* in Trinity West and the *Twillingate Sun* were used and supported as political instruments by politicians William Whiteway and Robert Bond. Of the two, the *Sun* stood out as a successful venture to the mid-twentieth century due mainly to its political acuity, but also because of the emergence of a wage-earning consumer population, the promise of growth a railway suggested, and the religious leanings of the editor, Jabez Thompson.

## 2.7

### Structure of the Newspaper Business

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<sup>29</sup>*Public Ledger*, editorial, and letter to the editor from "Philopatri," 11 June 1867.

<sup>30</sup>J.K. Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics, 1870-1901," *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation* eds. James K. Hiller and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) 123-147.

Studies of the press focus on either journalism content, including newspaper marketing and distribution to a varied audience, or newspaper production as an industry dependent on the manufacture and supply of paper and machinery based on economy of scale, and also on market concentration.<sup>31</sup> A study of the press in nineteenth-century Newfoundland is hampered by the absence of business records that might provide such valuable information. Registration of incorporated companies was not instituted until 1900,<sup>32</sup> and although registration of newspapers was required from 1807, along with affidavits, early records are not extant. An incomplete file available only from 1877 provides names and addresses of principals, but no financial information. Excepting a copy of the original *Royal Gazette* list, subscription lists are not extant.<sup>33</sup> Nor were individual editors' occasional claims to circulation figures substantiated, so they are unreliable. Disputes among publishers were not usually discussed in the press; when partnerships formed or were dissolved, details were not

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<sup>31</sup>See Svennik Høyer, Stig Hadenius, and Lennart Weibull, *The Politics and Economics of the Press: A Developmental Perspective* (London; Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1975). See also, H. A. Innis, *The Press: A Neglected Factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century*, Stamp Memorial Lecture, (University of London, The Athlone Press, 1949).

<sup>32</sup>*Evening Telegram*, founded in 1879, was not registered as an incorporated company until 1922.

<sup>33</sup>Those names were contained in the original petition supporting the establishment of a newspaper in St. John's and are not necessarily indicative of the number of actual subscribers. See H.M. Mosdel, *When was that?: a chronological dictionary of important events in Newfoundland down to and including 1922* (St. John's: Trade Printers & Publishers, 1923), 162 -163.

usually disclosed. One extraordinary exception in the 1840s of alleged dishonesty threatened the religious reputation of *Courier* publisher Joseph Woods, resulting in a published lengthy rebuttal. It revealed the average annual net income shared equally between Woods and partner W.J. Ward of the *Morning Post* at £350, and the total worth of the business at about £500.<sup>34</sup> This financial profile by an injured party of one newspaper at a particular time may or may not be comparable to that of other newspapers.

Costs of running a press are virtually unknown, but secondary sources provide some idea of prices of equipment and supplies. Montreal newspapers advertised the 'Washington' iron hand press in 1832 at \$230 and \$275, not an excessive investment, even in the first half of the century, and second-hand presses were also available.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Courier*, 26 September 1846. The dissolution of the partnership, begun in 1843, had apparently come about after the end of the second year because of private debts of about £800 attributed to Ward. Ward had signed a legal agreement taking responsibility for the debt which was attached to the *Post*, rendering Woods blameless. Woods offered to pay Ward £150 if Ward would retire from the business. Ward chose to stay with the paper and pay the debt. Woods then took over, or purchased, the *Courier* from William Beck, and hired James Seaton as editor.

<sup>35</sup>Bryan Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing: A History From Lead Type to Lasers* (Ottawa: National Museum of Science and Technology, 1995), 27. The "Washington" iron hand press was extremely popular in the 1830s, and was still in use until at least the 1890s or later. A restored Washington, said to be in use in Newfoundland by the Queen's Printer for more than 100 years, is on display in the lower lobby of the Confederation Building in St. John's.

Power presses were still not in operation in Newfoundland as late as 1870.<sup>36</sup>

The newspapers in circulation in the decade leading up to 1870 were: *Courier*; *Express*; *Morning Chronicle*; *Morning Post and Shipping Gazette*; *Newfoundlander*; *Patriot*; *Public Ledger*; *Record*; *Royal Gazette*; *St. John's Daily News*; *Standard and Conception Bay Advertiser*; *Telegraph*; *Times and General Commercial Gazette*.

According to one source, these newspapers were printed at that time on the old-fashioned hand press.<sup>37</sup> It is likely that the wooden hand press was replaced by the sturdier iron hand press when that model became available around 1830. Nevertheless, the wooden hand press, requiring at least two persons to operate, appears to have been in use far into the century. The *Morning Chronicle* was the only newspaper in Newfoundland printed on a rotary press, the self-inking, fast American-made Hoe press imported by C.F. Bennett for his anti-confederate campaign in 1869.<sup>38</sup> The *Evening Telegram*, established in 1879, started on a hand press, but later (probably

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<sup>36</sup>W.H. Goodland, "Thirty Years of Journalism," *The Trade Review Commercial Annual*, (St. John's), 3 March 1901; reprint, 27 January 1906. Goodland was a printer and publisher in St. John's, in the partnership of Gray and Goodland, publishers of *Christmas Bells*, a literary and promotional Newfoundland annual magazine founded in 1892.

<sup>37</sup>Goodland, "Thirty Years."

<sup>38</sup>Goodland, "Thirty Years." More than one style of Hoe printing press was available. Goodland's account does not offer a precise description. The first successful rotary press was made by R. Hoe & Co., in the United States in 1846. See Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 63.

1882) advanced to a Quadrant press capable of producing 1,000 newspapers per hour,<sup>39</sup> and may have been the first newspaper sold locally for one penny.<sup>40</sup> After the great fire of 1892 in St. John's, which destroyed every newspaper establishment, more modern printing presses were installed by those who resumed business.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, newspaper advertisements appealed for quantities of cotton rags for paper-making. The collected rags were probably shipped to Britain or the United States, where paper was made and shipped back to buyers as flat sheets of newsprint.<sup>41</sup> By some accounts, paper was about 8.5 cents per pound in North America in the 1870s and declined dramatically in price toward the end of the century as more wood pulp was used in paper-making.<sup>42</sup> Clues to sources of supply are sometimes found by chance. For example, during a transfer of management in 1868, the editor blamed the disarray of the *Public Ledger* on a shortage of paper and the delay in a shipment from London.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that

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<sup>39</sup>The Quadrant was probably a multi-cylinder press which required four men to feed the paper into the press.

<sup>40</sup>Goodland, "Thirty Years."

<sup>41</sup>Paper was made in Ontario and Quebec from wood pulp in the 1860s. See Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 37. It is not known if these sources were available to newspaper owners in Newfoundland. Paper was more likely imported from England and the United States.

<sup>42</sup>H.A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951; reprint ed., 1991), 6.

<sup>43</sup>*Public Ledger*, 7 January 1868.

imported newsprint was pre-printed with 'news from abroad,' 'foreign intelligence,' or British parliamentary reports on the front page leaving blank portions to be filled with local reports and advertising.<sup>44</sup> A vague reference in the *Trade Review* suggests the possible local manufacture of ink in the late 1870s, which may have relieved shortages and import costs.<sup>45</sup> Raw materials used to make ink and inking balls may have been available locally, but it is more likely these, too, were imported. In the 1840s, advertisements by the Transatlantic Newspaper Office in Liverpool ran in the St. John's *Courier* offering stationers' supplies to all parts of the United States, Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland.<sup>46</sup> No information was found to confirm that the *Courier* or any other newspaper in St. John's was supplied in

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<sup>44</sup>"Patent outsides" were pre-printed sheets containing articles and patent medicine advertisements, and were supplied by J.C. Cameron & Co., of London, and S. Frank Wilson's Auxiliary Publishing Co. of Toronto, at costs less than newsprint and local labour. See Dewalt, *Technology*, 23, citing *Printer's Miscellany*, (Nov. 1876), 60; Elizabeth Hulse, "Newspapers Printed on the Cooperative Plan," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 22 (1983), 83. No evidence was found to confirm that "patent outsides" were used by newspapers in Newfoundland.

<sup>45</sup>W.H. Goodland, "Thirty Years."

<sup>46</sup>Supplies included types and printers, and were shipped from Liverpool on the fourth and 19th of every month. See, e.g., *Courier*, 29 January 1845. The supplier, in this instance, was Charles Wilmer, who also offered for sale at 12 s 6d, Charles Wilmer's American Newsletter "for events in Britain, Europe, and Asia between sailings, as well as a shipping list, and prices current in the market." Extracts from the newsletter appeared in the *Courier*, which suggests that the proprietor, who was William Beck at that time, either subscribed to the newsletter, or, as was sometimes the custom, received it free of charge in lieu of payment for running Wilmer's advertisements.



this way.<sup>47</sup>

Revenues cannot be determined, but it is clear that few newspaper publishers depended solely on subscriptions and advertising; most produced other work such as pamphlets, handbills, and stationery to augment their income. A few were also commission agents and notaries, remunerative work convenient to the printing trade. William Charles St. John of the *Weekly Herald* in Harbour Grace, and Stephen Daniel, the first editor of the *Courier* in St. John's, were just two examples. St. John also served as United States consul prior to 1852, and later for Brazil. Thomas Talbot, of the *Record* and the *Reporter* in St. John's in the 1850s and 1860s, and Adam Scott, editor of the *Public Ledger* in the 1860s and 1870s, were also schoolteachers, as was D.E. Gilmour in Harbour Grace in the 1840s. Joseph and John Woods, owners of the *Courier*, were prominent wholesale importers. Ambrose Shea, of the *Newfoundlander*, was also heavily involved in the import and export trades, both in goods and labour, and was agent for the Royal Mail Steam Ships in the 1860s, as well as a prominent politician until the late 1880s.

Lucrative government printing contracts, a customary form of patronage, were shared to a limited degree among the different newspaper proprietors. The contract for printing the *Journals* of the House of Assembly was monopolized by the Sheas of the *Newfoundlander* for many years. Publication of sessional legislative debates was meted

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<sup>47</sup> A thorough search of published cargo manifests might furnish more satisfactory information regarding printing supplies, but is beyond the scope of this study.

out to editors according to party loyalties. The number of newspapers -- not fewer than nine, and as many as 23, or an average of about 16 in each of the decades between 1830 and 1899 -- indicates that job-printing and advertising were highly competitive, and likely the greatest sources of revenue.<sup>48</sup>

The format, style, and content of newspapers in Newfoundland looked almost identical to newspapers printed anywhere in British North America, the United States, and Great Britain for most of the century. A sheet of paper approximately 13 inches by 17 inches, or slightly larger, folded once to make four pages, one side of which contained pages one and four, or the front and back pages; the reverse, or the 'inside' pages, two and three. Generally, the front and back pages were filled with small, tightly crowded advertisements. The masthead, beneath the title banner on the front page contained the address where the newspaper was printed, names of the publisher and editor, publication days, and subscription and advertising rates. A small space at the end of the last column on the back page repeated the information. Most carried extracts from British and American newspapers, parliamentary and other reports about on-going disputes and international wars, usually on the front and back pages.<sup>49</sup> Pages two and three contained local news, unsigned editorials, and letters to the editor,

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<sup>48</sup>Rates varied, and expenditure accounts in the Journals of the House of Assembly were not always itemized.

<sup>49</sup>Extracts had to be re-set by the compositor, a precise, time-consuming job, suggesting the importance of news from abroad, particularly to those involved in commercial trade, tariffs, and interested in government relations, and international wars that might affect ocean-going trade.

almost always signed with a pseudonym. The inside pages also carried local legislative reports, occasional brief accounts of fish catches, vessel reports, church notices, and school reports. Poetry and serial fiction had their place, and a minimum of space was afforded to births, deaths and marriages.

Newspapers were usually one or two-man operations, conducted with very few auxiliary helpers. This was due, in part, to the simplicity of the printing presses which could turn out not more than 100 copies per hour, following the more lengthy and arduous task of setting the lead type, composing, and preparing the paper for printing, all by hand. Delinquent subscribers were sometimes reminded of the hard work. Distribution to remote areas was dependent on mail boat schedules. Although newspapers appeared to thrive in St. John's and Conception Bay, outside of those areas even toward the end of the century, technology did not accelerate production as happened in large urban centres.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary, by 1880, the numbers of newspapers had reached a plateau and had begun to decline.

Families provided the foundation of the newspaper trade in many cases throughout the century. The names Ryan, Winton, Parsons, St. John, Shea, Ward, Woods, M'Coubrey, and Herder, headed up family-based newspapers. Of those, five were early immigrants who made Newfoundland their home; the others, Parsons, St.

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<sup>50</sup>Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985). This work focuses on the later years of the nineteenth century and discusses the impact of technology and urbanization, where rapid increases of newspapers occurred in major urban areas of Britain.

John, Shea, and Herder, were native Newfoundlanders.<sup>51</sup> As elsewhere, newspaper editors were often printers first, having learned the trade in another man's print shop, then leaving to become his competitor. Haire and Lee may have been the first to do so in Newfoundland. R.J. Parsons, employed as printer at the *Public Ledger*, left after a serious quarrel with owner Henry David Winton, and later became his arch rival as editor of the *Newfoundland Patriot*.

Personal animosity among editors was a characteristic feature of the trade that hinged on not only editorial one-upmanship, but deeply held opinions based on religious differences. Most editors were Protestant and identified their newspapers with their personal religion. A majority Methodist/Congregationalist press conformed with evangelical, or revivalist imperatives, practical Christian education, and social reform. The Church of England had strong representation among the publishing fraternity supporting conservative interests of the Crown and the Church. Catholic publishers presented a more complicated mixture of native political interests, liberalism, and imported Irish nationalist sentiment which at times suggested a working class press. While the worst tensions were episodic, sectarianism infected newspaper journalism to the end of the century.

A multitude of social factors contributed to the significance of newspaper journalism in Newfoundland history. Commerce and politics were, as the secondary

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<sup>51</sup>Family and business connections are discussed in the succeeding chapters and delineated in Appendix 1, A-H, 316-323.

literature affirms, the basis on which most newspapers started anywhere at any time. Religion and morality were equally important, as were political ideology, technology, and urbanization, and all considered essential to a civilized society. The generally understood purpose of journalism -- to inform, instruct, and uphold and promote social values, particularly practical Christian values, in family, business, recreation, personal, and political life -- were the same values preached by the Churches and promoted by the Government. As an institution, the newspaper press was part of that establishment; it created an extra-parliamentary political public sphere, but mainly for an articulate and politically involved elite. The press, through its journalism, purported to reflect the whole society in its discussions of poverty, temperance, and social and political reform, but in nineteenth-century Newfoundland it comprised essentially a small but powerful group talking to itself.

### Chapter Three: Religion, Politics, and the Press to 1860s

#### 3.1 Introduction

Writing in the 1890s, D.W. Prowse claimed that there was "no real bigotry or sectarian intolerance in Newfoundland," only that which was "made to order." He claimed that the "simple crowd," whether Catholic or Protestant, were led by "designing rogues and a few rowdies" to believe their rights or their religion were in danger.<sup>1</sup> Prowse knew, however, that religion and politics had been deeply intertwined earlier in the century, but felt obliged to "walk... delicately, in order to avoid offence."<sup>2</sup> He had little to say about the press in Newfoundland, unfortunately, but no doubt understood it had its share of "designing rogues," and his reference to the "simple crowd" suggests that he also knew that the press was the preserve of the politically active elite rather than the population at large.

The newspaper press in Newfoundland in the nineteenth century was foremost a commercial business, dependent on political patronage, and operating in the context of a Christian society. Just as that society was divided between Catholic and

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<sup>1</sup>D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland From The English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895; reprint edition, Amsterdam: Meridian, 1971; St. John's, NF: Dicks, 1971; Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972; reprint edition, Portugal Cove-St. Philips, Newfoundland: Boulder Publications Ltd., 2002), 482-483.

<sup>2</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 482.

Protestant, so was the press. Publishers and editors identified themselves and each other as representing Catholics, or one of the Protestant denominations -- Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Congregationalist.<sup>3</sup> This did not make their newspapers religious in the same sense as church publications, but reflected their affiliations, reinforcing the personal nature of the newspaper business, and the vital role institutional religion played in terms of cultural identity and politics in Newfoundland society.

Historians of Newfoundland have shown how deeply religion and politics were linked.<sup>4</sup> Often, they refer to Newfoundland newspapers as either Catholic or Protestant but fail to provide clear definitions and explanations. The purpose of this chapter is to show how difficult is to explain the religious underpinnings of the press, given the rivalries, compromises, and accommodations made to achieve social, economic, and political goals, as many journalists were at the same time career politicians. Divisiveness among Catholic editors prevented a monolithic 'Catholic press,' and dissention among Protestants splintered a 'Protestant press,' while politics, which also defined the press, forged Catholic/Protestant alliances. This was a society full of complexities, where charitable associations, business relationships, and party politics

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<sup>3</sup>Census records show small numbers of Baptists after mid-century and small but growing numbers of the Salvation Army toward the end of the century. There is no evidence that members of either religious group were involved in the newspaper business.

<sup>4</sup>Among the most notable, relative to their concentration on newspapers and newspaper editors, are Phillip McCann, Patrick O'Flaherty, and John P. Greene.

sometimes required religious differences to be set aside.<sup>5</sup> The press reflected these divisions and alliances: conservative Catholic versus radical, or pseudo-radical Catholic; Methodist versus Church of England versus Congregationalist; native versus immigrant; Liberal versus Conservative; St. John's versus outport. In the end, a conservative Catholic press prevailed and outlived radical interventions, and a Protestant press predominated in number if not in spirit, with Methodists in the majority.

Frederick Jones described Newfoundland as a microcosm of England and Ireland combined, where "Irish Nationalism, Ultramontanism, Tractarianism, Methodism, and Evangelicalism produced...a society in which proud independence and denominationalism were part of its very fabric."<sup>6</sup> Taking a wider British North American perspective, Terrence Murphy suggested there was no defining victory for a single denomination, or one form of Christianity. The situation was "far too complex to be reduced to polar opposites."<sup>7</sup> The middle class of merchants, artisans,

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<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Kerr discussed the limitation of a strict Catholic/Protestant definition in his study of Newfoundland. He claimed that a "tacit accommodation" between the elites of St. John's and the outports, maintained through shared religious affiliation, was what made Newfoundland's political system work. See Kenneth Kerr, "A Social Analysis of the Members of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, Executive Council, and Legislative Council 1855-1914" (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973), 515.

<sup>6</sup>Frederick Jones, "The Church in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," *Bulletin of Canadian Studies*, 3-5, 1979-81, 25-41.

<sup>7</sup>Terrence Murphy, "The English-speaking Colonies to 1854," *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada*, eds. Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin (London: Oxford



professionals, and government officials encouraged the cause of Christianity as "essential to the creation of a stable and prosperous society."<sup>8</sup> Newspaper printers, publishers and editors would have to be included in that middle class, and were, without question among the most important advocates of that principle. Life's rewards flowed from the Christian principles of honesty, obedience to authority, truth, sobriety, and industriousness. These were the marks of a so-called civilized society. While all may have agreed on these basic conventions, denominational differences were laden with cultural and political differences. The struggles that ensued were predominantly political, in which one or another denomination strived for ascendancy within a political party system. In Newfoundland, Liberalism subsequently became synonymous with Catholic interests, and Conservatism synonymous with those of Protestants.

### 3.2

#### Religious Affiliations

Prior to 1832, newspapers were not characterised by religious affiliation. But following the establishment of a local legislature in 1832, and the emergence of a political community, religious differences became dominant. This had much to do with the campaign launched by Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming against a colonial state which was Protestant-dominated, though at the time Catholics constituted a majority of

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University Press, 1996), 108-189, 136.

<sup>8</sup>Murphy, "The English-Speaking Colonies," 114.

the population.<sup>9</sup> His aim was to gain for his flock a fair share of political power and influence, and those institutions which would safeguard its Irish Catholic identity.<sup>10</sup>

Newspapers labelled Catholic between 1832 and 1864 were the *Newfoundlander*, *Patriot*, *Vindicator/Indicator*, *Pilot*, *Record*, and *Tri-weekly Bulletin*. Those described as Protestant during this period were the *Public Ledger*, *Times*, *Star* and *Conception Bay Journal*, *Express*, *Star* and *Newfoundland Advocate*, *Telegraph*, and *Courier*. These were not unified or harmonious groups. The owners/editors of five of the six "Catholic" newspapers were indeed Catholic, but their political views differed, and they were ethnically divided despite their Irish origins. The *Patriot* was an anomaly; its founder and owners were Protestant, while prominent Catholic journalists were closely connected with it. The owners/editors of the Protestant newspapers were denominationally divided into Church of England, Congregationalist, and Methodist; each had specific political goals often differing from those of the others.

Such was the religious and cultural makeup of Newfoundland generally, which

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<sup>9</sup>In 1838, two-thirds of residents of St. John's and half the total population of the island were Roman Catholics. See Frederick W. Rowe, *A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980) 268. The census record of 1845 confirmed a majority of Catholics in Newfoundland, especially in St. John's and immediate outlying areas. The 1857 census placed Catholics at only 46 per cent of the total population, but St. John's remained predominantly Catholic.

<sup>10</sup>This campaign coincided with those of Fleming's friend, "the Liberator," Daniel O'Connell, MP for County Clare, who had forced the issue of Catholic emancipation in the British House of Commons in 1829, and won. He was also influential in having passed the Reform Bill of 1832.

received formal expression through the press. The sectarian friction that defined early political life, and is a central issue of Newfoundland historiography, was nurtured in these newspapers, the only public record of legislative discourse, and the most open venue for reaction. The first two decades of shaky representative government became somewhat more stable toward mid-century. Sectarian discord began to wane as the campaign for Responsible Government, achieved in 1855, sought proportional representation. However, by 1861, a general election campaign erupted into political/religious violence within Catholic precincts that gave cause for general reflection. A closer look at these newspapers in this period shows how religion was utilized on a continual basis, and why they cannot be read or understood as anything other than a fundamental ingredient of the local culture.

### 3.3 Catholic versus Protestant versus Nativist: A Potent Brew

Immigrant editors and publishers in Newfoundland invariably bore some hostility from native counterparts, regardless of their religion, important as that was. Likewise, native editors and publishers were not shielded from retaliation, usually sectarian, often direct, sometimes disguised, but always bitter.

Henry David Winton, British immigrant publisher and editor of the *Public Ledger* (1820-1855), a Congregationalist, is portrayed generally in the literature as an adversary of Bishop Fleming. To the exclusion of other newspaper editors in

Newfoundland for the period, Winton has received wide recognition, mainly because of the physical assault and mutilation he suffered as a result of his stand against clerical involvement in politics.<sup>11</sup> Much of the criticism levelled at Winton within the editorial fraternity came from the *Patriot* (1833-1890), whose editor, Robert J. Parsons, a Protestant Newfoundlander, was an embittered former employee of Winton who remained his arch-enemy. Both Winton and Parsons figure prominently in the religious/political history of Newfoundland.

A lesser known publisher and editor for the period is Anglican, John Thomas Burton. In 1834, a letter to the editor of the *Patriot* from "Hibernicus" referred to Burton as "Tom Noddle...more bigoted and devilish than Winton himself."<sup>12</sup> "Hibernicus" could find no more fitting insult to fling at Burton for his characterization of the Catholic Church as "the Scarlet Whore of babylon!" and the *Patriot* "one of her Bullies."<sup>13</sup> The *Patriot* at this time was under the direction of William Carson, a Unitarian, Parsons, a Presbyterian, and John V. Nugent, an Irish Catholic immigrant, all on friendly terms with Fleming for social and political reasons. It is fair to speculate, given evidence of concocted letters to the editor, that Nugent, known for his vituperation, may have been "Hibernicus." Kesterton cited this particular

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<sup>11</sup>For a comprehensive profile see Patrick O'Flaherty, "Winton, Henry David", *DCB*, VIII, 947-951.

<sup>12</sup>*Patriot*, 23 December 1834.

<sup>13</sup>*Patriot*, 23 December 1834.

exchange of "invective, diatribe, and billingsgate" suggesting that it was common fare in early nineteenth-century journalism in Canada.<sup>14</sup>

Burton is of interest because he published and edited not one, but several newspapers in Conception Bay and St. John's<sup>15</sup> which almost no one else did, and, a staunch supporter of the Church of England, consistently referred to himself as a "native son."<sup>16</sup> Spurred by talk of a "natives' society" in St. John's, Burton moved his printing press from Carbonear to "the metropolis" in the fall of 1840, and brought out the *Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, its banner adorned with bible and crown, a fitting symbol of church and state. Burton declared himself a "subject of the Crown" who would always be faithful to the Bible on which he relied for the success of his journalistic venture.<sup>17</sup> New to the predominantly Catholic market of St. John's, articles discrediting the Catholic Church,<sup>18</sup> and extracts explaining "Puseyism"<sup>19</sup> were frequent,

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<sup>14</sup>Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada*, 18-19.

<sup>15</sup>*Star and Conception Bay Journal* (1833-1840); *Star and Newfoundland Advocate* (1840-1847); and the *Telegraph and Political Review* (1856-1875). He also published the *Express* with James Seaton, a Presbyterian, from 1851 to 1866, and the pro-Confederate *Comet* in 1869.

<sup>16</sup>Virtually no biographical information about Burton was located.

<sup>17</sup>*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 14 November 1840.

<sup>18</sup>*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 30 October 1841; 7 April 1842; 21 April 1842.

<sup>19</sup>"Puseyism" refers to the influence of theologian, Edward Bouvier Pusey (1800-1882), an English Tractarian leader of the Oxford Movement.

a sign of Burton's support of Edward Feild, the Tractarian who became Bishop of Newfoundland and Bermuda in 1844.

Burton was not long established in St. John's before he became involved in politics. For several weeks in the fall of 1842 he advertised the nomination of Thomas Bennett, a fish merchant and member of the Church of England Cathedral Vestry, as a Conservative candidate for St. John's in that year's general election. Although Bennett was one of a three-man team, only his nomination appeared in the *Star*, supported by a list of more than 100 supporters. The list included Burton, John William M'Coubrey of the *Times*, and Henry D. Winton of the *Public Ledger*.<sup>20</sup> The other two Conservative candidates were Walter Grieve, a Presbyterian merchant, and Patrick Kough, a defiant Roman Catholic, and a government contractor.<sup>21</sup> All three were immigrants (which raises the question of how genuine were Burton's nativist bleatings). What they had most in common were their commercial interests and their abhorrence of what Burton termed the radicalism of the Liberal candidates for St. John's, Dr. William Carson, John Valentine Nugent, and Lawrence O'Brien, all

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<sup>20</sup>Winton also ran in the 1842 election, but was defeated as the Conservative candidate for Burin.

<sup>21</sup>Kough, who joined with Protestant Conservatives, was said to be an anti-clerical Catholic. Both Kough and Grieve were Conservative candidates in a byelection in 1833. Kough is also cited as one of the "Mad Dogs" or "Orange Catholics". See, for example, John Greene, *Between Starvation and Damnation, Priests and Merchants in Newfoundland Politics, 1745-1855* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 114-115; see also, Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland A History to 1843* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), 153-155.

favoured by Bishop Fleming.

Nugent, then editor of the *Indicator*, was the particular target of the *Star's* editorial condemnation. Here was a despised contemporary, not only accusing merchants such as Thomas Bennett of creating poverty in Newfoundland,<sup>22</sup> but a rival in the trade who obtained lucrative government printing contracts.<sup>23</sup> On both counts, Burton could do little more than comment. He also argued that by holding their nomination meeting on the Sabbath, the Liberal candidates had shown themselves unfit for office. If such men were elected, he reasoned, they would have the "power to make the Lord's day an instrument for working all the evil passions of our nature."

...such violation of God's own Day is indefensible...a subject for the Legislature to take up...it would be incumbent on the Government to enforce...There can be no justifiable excuse for such reckless conduct...<sup>24</sup>

Burton later wrote a glowing editorial about the Conservative team, saying that he wished to impress upon the minds of his readers that "the POLITICAL contest which is about to take place has no relationship whatever to do with RELIGION...."<sup>25</sup> Disingenuous at best, these tactics to impress with enlarged, capitalized type, merely drew attention to the obvious -- that religion had much to do with politics, and that newspaper editors contributed to the unrest. Neither Burton's flagrant abuse of the

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<sup>22</sup>*Star*, 27 October 1842; 10 November 1842; 17 November 1842.

<sup>23</sup>*Star*, 20 October 1842.

<sup>24</sup>*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 15 September 1842.

<sup>25</sup>*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 6 October 1842.

Catholic Church nor his open support of the Church of England gained him support from other Protestant editors. But his loyalty to Conservative mercantile interests was repaid with his later election to the House of Assembly in 1865 and again in 1873. Nugent's loyalty to Liberalism was also rewarded, and he, too, was elected to the legislature from 1836 to 1848 where he achieved greater prominence than Burton. What this suggests is that in the first decade of local government (1832-1842), the press, which had generally promised to be a collective "watchdog," proved instead to be a divisive, unsettling influence contributing to sectarian factionalism that lasted in various forms for many years.

### 3.4

#### Native Catholic versus Catholic Immigrant

Kerr argued that a man's religion dictated his chances for election, but concluded that viewpoints within denominational groups could shift, and undermine religious solidarity on political issues.<sup>26</sup> This was true in the first half of the century, and was particularly evident among the Catholic community on the Avalon Peninsula.

Bishops James Louis O'Donnel, Patrick Lambert, and Thomas Scallan had maintained a cordial relationship with the local government, but the situation changed with the arrival of Fleming. He acknowledged the British monarchy, but unlike his predecessors, demanded as a right the full participation of his people in all aspects of government and society. Yet, when it came to the administrative and financial control

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<sup>26</sup>Kerr, "A Social Analysis," 347-351.



of church affairs, Fleming rejected as intolerable his predecessors' inclusion of laymen. Fleming's stand on these two issues resulted in clashes between leading members of the Catholic community and protracted political conflict. Those who disagreed with Fleming were called "mad dogs" or "Orange Catholics," labels which fuelled religious prejudice and further complicated cultural and ideological differences within all groups. At the close of 1842, "A Native" reminded newspaper readers of the peaceful past when

...hundreds of fellow Christians of all denominations filled the *Old London Tavern* on every St. Patrick's day to dinner, where the Rt. Rev. Dr. O'Donnel and Protestant Clergy sat beside each other on terms of friendship, the Judges, Magistrates, and Heads of Departments vying with each other in remarks of civility to all around.<sup>27</sup>

Not so in the 1840s, the writer contended, when the school set up by the Benevolent Irish Society, originally for the benefit of all, had been taken over by Fleming, with J. V. Nugent, a close ally, vice-president of the Society. In trying to rouse the working class to militancy, Nugent, as editor of the *Indicator* and the *Vindicator* had attacked merchants as oppressors and warned of Protestant dominance.<sup>28</sup>

O'Flaherty describes the Newfoundland scene of the 1830s and 1840s as one of fear and paranoia transplanted from Tipperary by Fleming, his priests, and the 'new

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<sup>27</sup>*Star*, 1 December 1842.

<sup>28</sup>The *Vindicator* began in 1841. Nugent was editor for about six months in 1842. Hampered by libel suits, its last extant issue was 14 May 1842. It was followed by the *Indicator* in 1843, with Nugent continuing as editor.

Irish.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps an apt description, it bears noting J.V. Nugent's (one of the 'new Irish') early connection with the *Patriot*, its connection with Fleming, and Fleming's personal friendship with O'Connell. Was there a serious Irish nationalist O'Connellite movement in Newfoundland, utilizing newspapers as instruments of political reform? This question is not easy to answer with certainty, but the evidence suggests these impulses were present. It does not, however, suggest extremes that terms such as 'fear and paranoia' connote. These traits were already present in Newfoundland in the split between liberal and conservative Catholics under Fleming's bishopric, and spilled over into Liberal and Conservative politics in which Fleming felt he had the right to engage. Notwithstanding official British pleas to the Vatican, two governors and a judge who opposed him were removed out of exasperation from the island while Fleming maintained his position. Through a hard-fought struggle, Fleming secured most of what he wanted in the time available to him -- publicly-funded Catholic education and land grants for building schools, convents, and a large cathedral on an imposing site in St. John's.<sup>30</sup> His influence in the politics of the island was borne out in the rift between the "new Irish" and those who referred to themselves as "native

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<sup>29</sup>O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland*, 152-202; 203.

<sup>30</sup>Fleming first arrived in Newfoundland in 1823. He succeeded Bishop Thomas Scallan in 1830, and died in 1850 in St. John's. Much scholarly work has been done on the life of Michael Anthony Fleming. The most recent comprehensive study is John FitzGerald, "Conflict and Culture in Irish Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850," (PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1997). See also Raymond J. Lahey, "Michael Anthony Fleming," *DCB*, VII, 292-300; O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland*; Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*.

sons," such as Burton, but also between the "new Irish" and native Catholics, such as the Sheas of the *Newfoundlander*.

Fleming had had full access to the *Newfoundlander* prior to the departure from the colony in 1837 of its first publisher, John Shea, to take up residence in Ireland. The *Newfoundlander* continued to show every respect for the Church, but the remaining brothers sidestepped sectarian feuds. William R., Edward D., Joseph, and Ambrose, all born in Newfoundland, had specific professional, business, and political interests of their own, best served by avoiding confrontation with the government. The Sheas had not suffered impediments to full participation in government after 1832 -- one of the main grievances advanced by Nugent in the *Indicator* on behalf of Irish Catholics generally.<sup>31</sup> It followed that the Sheas would not long tolerate Nugent's apparent Irish Catholic "radicalism."

In the general election campaign of 1842, Nugent issued a warning in the *Indicator*, that the polling stations scheduled for Catholic communities in Placentia-St. Mary's District were to be re-located to Protestant areas.<sup>32</sup> Indignant that Newfoundlanders would be thought so gullible to accept such abuse of executive

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<sup>31</sup>The proprietor of the *Indicator* was Michael Jordan. He was joined in 1845 by William A. Ryall for a short time, after which no issues are extant. No biographical information was located on Jordan or Ryall, neither of whom was involved with any other local newspaper. Given their interest in Irish Repeal and temperance, they may have also been Irish immigrants whose stay in Newfoundland was brief.

<sup>32</sup>According to Shea's editorials Nugent's warning to voters in Placentia appeared in the 12 November 1842 issue of the *Indicator*. The earliest extant issue is 18 November 1843 (Vol.2, No. 72).

power, Ambrose Shea, then a prominent member of the Newfoundland Natives' Society<sup>33</sup> called for censure of Nugent and his newspaper. In an editorial in the *Newfoundlander*, Shea rejected Nugent's claims:

It is not enough that he had done his endeavours to stir up the bad passions of those among whom he resides, and seeks to array the different bodies in this community in violent hostility; but he must needs fling into the remote districts of the Island the brand of religious discord caring little how it might fester and rankle, or what amount of ill may arise from its blighting and destructive influence.<sup>34</sup>

The Sheas had always tried to distance their newspaper from the "incendiary journalism" of some of their contemporaries. In this instance, in the heat of an election, Shea, though he was not a candidate, wanted nothing to do with mixing religion and politics:

Religious differences have themselves a tendency to create distinctions enough, particularly in unenlightened communities -- and it is therefore the duty, as it is the desire of every man who values peace and well being of Society, to avoid any reference to their existence, unless compelled by circumstances....<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, in his description of the outports as "unenlightened," Shea betrayed a patronizing attitude which often set himself and the *Newfoundlander* apart.

The acrimony between Shea and Nugent continued. Shea took umbrage with

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<sup>33</sup>See Geoff Budden, "The Role of the Newfoundland Natives' Society in the political crisis of 1840-42," (Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983); Patrick O'Flaherty, "The Newfoundland Natives' Society," *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 4, 21-27.

<sup>34</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 24 November 1842.

<sup>35</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 24 November 1842.

Nugent's insinuations that he (Shea) believed "Irishmen [were] opposed to Natives of the Colony."<sup>36</sup> Shea asked readers to see the "conceit" in Nugent's argument:

If all were like the editor of the *Indicator*, Irishmen might indeed feel themselves obnoxious to the charge which he has so insultingly assumed for them. With his usual modesty, he would ascribe to himself the impersonation of all that Irishmen feel, think, or can wish for -- *L'Etat est moi* -- *C'est moi qu'est l'Etat*, said Louis XIV; & why should not the Editor of the *Indicator* in his puissance exclaim, 'I am Ireland -- Ireland is me!'<sup>37</sup>

Nugent had a ready rejoinder, referring to John Shea, "brother of the *Newfoundlander*" who had been elected to Cork City Council -- proof enough of Ireland's fondness for Newfoundland. Incensed, Shea reminded the audacious Nugent that his brother was one of those whom

...the *Indicator* and his confederates delighted to honor with the designations which are now again so rife, of *Orange Catholic*, and *Tory*... an enemy to his Religion, and the vilest of Tories... the schemes of this unprincipled clique must result in the ruin of everything which liberal men are desirous to preserve and seek to establish....<sup>38</sup>

Personal invective was rare in the *Newfoundlander*, and in this instance, provoked in the defence of a brother. However, it served to show how different were some Irish cultural transfers amid an emerging Newfoundland nativism. These newspapers run by Catholics were politically and ethnically divided from the beginning, as clearly demonstrated in the firm position taken by Shea, the Catholic

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<sup>36</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842.

<sup>37</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842.

<sup>38</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842.

Newfoundlander in opposition to Nugent, the Catholic Irish immigrant. A "Catholic" press was hard to identify, and would continue to show how slight was the possibility of harmony among journalists who placed themselves in positions of leadership. Thomas Talbot was another example; like Nugent, an educated and articulate Irish Catholic immigrant, he might have made a valuable contribution as a journalist. Instead, he was often piqued and petty, as well as self-serving, if not eccentric, arousing the worst possible reaction, especially from some quarters of the Protestant press.

So scarce are any accounts by Newfoundland journalists, except for editorial production, that a pamphlet by Talbot, which provides insight into the man and his purpose in Newfoundland, bears some attention.<sup>39</sup> Talbot also warrants notice because he was a colleague of Nugent in the 1840s when both men were school masters at the newly established non-denominational St. John's Academy.<sup>40</sup> As a journalist, Talbot was most active during the period 1832-1864 when political conflicts within Catholic ranks were intense.

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<sup>39</sup>Thomas Talbot, *Newfoundland; Or, A Letter Addressed To A Friend In Ireland In Relation To The Condition And Circumstances Of The Island Of Newfoundland, With An Especial View To Emigration*, (London, 1882). Although this work offers some insight into Talbot's background, names and dates of people and events are lacking. The intent of the pamphlet appears to have been mainly the promotion of emigration of Irish farmers to Newfoundland.

<sup>40</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 657.

### 3.5 Thomas Talbot, Militant Journalist or Malcontent?

Thomas Talbot arrived in Newfoundland on 24 May 1837, in a small sailing vessel, after a month-long journey from his native Ireland. He stayed only a week in St. John's before travelling on to Harbour Grace, Conception Bay, to be with his father, who by then "was residing on his farm there, having retired from the business of the fishery."<sup>41</sup>

Politics, education, and journalism filled what may have been a celibate life.<sup>42</sup> He was certainly active in politics before 1855, when he declined a nomination to run in that year's election, the first under responsible government, a cause for which Talbot claimed he had "exerted all [his] influence, in the press and on the platform, in favour of the Liberal party."<sup>43</sup> Though he claimed the "priests' party" had been against him, he

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<sup>41</sup>Talbot, *Newfoundland*, 6. Thomas Talbot was born in 1815/17, and was taught by a Father McGrath, parish priest of Owing, Co Kilkenny, perhaps in preparation for priesthood training. He may have been the son of William Talbot (b. 1792, d. 1873) and Mary Lonnergan, (b. 1794, d. 1823); William Talbot removed to Newfoundland, engaged in the fishery, leaving wife and child in Ireland. Thomas Talbot later followed at age 22/23. I am indebted to Dr. John Mannion for this information.

<sup>42</sup>Discrepancies relative to the Talbot name appear in historical accounts by Gunn and Greene. Gertrude Gunn claimed that Thomas Talbot was elected to the Newfoundland legislature representing Conception Bay in 1852; for Harbour Main in 1855; was not elected in 1859; and elected for St. John's West in 1861. See Gertrude Gunn, *The Political History of Newfoundland 1832-1864* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), Appendix B, 193-202. Greene cited William Talbot, a teacher at some time in Carbonear, as the member elected for Conception Bay in 1852, and for Harbour Main in 1855. See Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*, 242, 258, 261. No mention of William Talbot is made in the Talbot pamphlet.

<sup>43</sup>Talbot, *Newfoundland*, 43.

was elected in 1861 for St. John's West and took his seat with the defeated Liberal party in opposition.<sup>44</sup> Now *persona grata*, he also accepted a teaching position at St. Bonaventure's College, which he could do because the House sat in the evenings, and only for two or three months in winter.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, Talbot described his circumstances as a devotion to the "two spheres of service where the greatest amount of general public good could be accomplished."<sup>46</sup>

During the late 1850s, though, he was not one of the inner circle, and his journalistic career faced some obstacles. He may have written for several newspapers in Conception Bay and St. John's, but the first concrete evidence of Talbot, as journalist, appears in 1855-56. During the 1856 session of the legislature, Talbot was "unanimously appointed" official reporter by the Legislative Council, according to an editorial in the *Patriot* bearing the heading, "The Official Reporter to the Council."<sup>47</sup> The editorial made it clear that Talbot's appointment was in compensation for helping to secure a Liberal majority to the House of Assembly -- "a sort of quietus until something better should turn up!"<sup>48</sup> It did not preclude others from making reports, but

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<sup>44</sup>Talbot, *Newfoundland*, 44-47

<sup>45</sup>Talbot, *Newfoundland*, 47- 48.

<sup>46</sup>Talbot, *Newfoundland*.

<sup>47</sup>*Patriot*, 26 May 1856.

<sup>48</sup>*Patriot*, 26 May 1856. This editorial, "The Official Reporter to the Council," was reprinted in *The Reporter*, 29 May 1856. The inference is that Talbot wrote editorials in favour of the Liberals, or otherwise campaigned on their behalf.



it was understood that Talbot would provide his reports to the Catholic *Newfoundlander* and to the Methodist *Courier*.<sup>49</sup>

Demands were soon made that the reports be given as well to the Protestant *Express* and to the Protestant *Public Ledger*. Complaints that these reports were published late caused Talbot to start a new newspaper, *The Reporter*, giving him more control. He claimed that before his "official" appointment by the Council, reports from the House of Assembly were never regular nor accurate, and that his ability to write in shorthand, a skill he said he introduced to the colony, ensured speed, accuracy, and debates in full.

Within a short time new complaints arose from certain unnamed members of the House of Assembly who were unhappy with reports of their speeches. Talbot first admonished the members for not signing their real names, and went on to inform them that "a reporter is not bound to take every word and every sentence which a long-tongued speaker may choose to enunciate," suggesting they "talk less and reason more."<sup>50</sup> It is not surprising that Talbot soon lost favour with government and elected members, and was unceremoniously dismissed.

*The Reporter* was printed by R.J. Parsons's son, John R. Parsons, on the

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<sup>49</sup>Talbot would have received payment from the House of Assembly, as would the newspapers for printing the reports.

<sup>50</sup>*The Reporter*, 31 January 1856. Its banner read, "Second Session -- No. 3." This is the first issue available. A prospectus is not extant.

presses of the *Patriot* and published from its office.<sup>51</sup> Talbot's arrangement with Parsons and the *Patriot* was convenient, practical, and mutually beneficial. But neither the *Reporter*, nor the *Patriot* received any support from the new Liberal government, of which Parsons was an elected member. Talbot thought this was wrong, and argued that his contract with Parsons should be understood and honoured:

...in order...that the Reports should appear within a reasonable time before the public, I determined upon engaging the services of another Newspaper, the *Patriot*, of whom Mr. Parsons is the Proprietor. I made arrangements with this gentleman, and in doing so bound myself in liabilities to a considerable amount; -- to these arrangements I am bound to adhere under any circumstances.<sup>52</sup>

Talbot's pleas went unheeded. Every issue of *The Reporter* in May and June of 1856 gave several columns of space to this grievance, blaming James Tobin, member of the Legislative Council, and George Emerson, the Solicitor General, "the two honest Haligonians!" for the loss of his contract. Supposedly, in defence of the "independence of the press," Talbot expressed disbelief that his party loyalty was so abused:

the [L]iberal government showering its patronage not only on the *Courier, & Newfoundlander*, but also on the *Ledger and Express*, while it completely ignored the *Patriot* and ourselves, was so abhorrent to our feelings that, if no other consideration existed, we could not but

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<sup>51</sup>John R. Parsons' name appeared as printer at the bottom of the last column on the last page of the *Reporter*. John R. Parsons is listed as printer for *The Reporter* (1856), as well as publisher of the *Tri-Weekly Bulletin* (1861), and publisher of the *Patriot* (1863 -1864).

<sup>52</sup>*The Reporter*, 22 May 1856. Talbot did not disclose the details of the liabilities, financial, legal, or otherwise.

recoil at it. It was in itself a damning treason.<sup>53</sup>

The treason, he said, was "black and deep" as well as damning, claiming that the other journals had done "nothing" in the struggle to gain a local legislature. At that time, Talbot said, "... not only Liberty but Religion looked to the *Patriot* and only to the *Patriot* for protection against their assailants..."<sup>54</sup>

The *Reporter* was originally to be published only while the legislature was in session. But obliged to keep his commitment to Parsons, when the legislature closed in June 1856, Talbot announced that "this little journal" would appear the following Thursday in a "new and improved form -- devoted to general topics of the day." The price would be two pence, an increase of one penny.<sup>55</sup> When *The Reporter* appeared on 3 July 1856, its front page banner was resplendent with the modestly attired female figure holding the scales of justice, a clear statement by the spurned, but righteous Talbot, beneath which he inscribed, "Thomas Talbot (Late reporter To The Hon. The Legislative Council,) Responsible Editor and Proprietor."

Although the *Patriot* had been historically associated with Catholic interests, it was mainly because Parsons shared a political ideology with those who embraced

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<sup>53</sup>*The Reporter*, 5 June 1856.

<sup>54</sup>*The Reporter*, 5 June 1856. The reference to liberty and religion was undoubtedly in connection with the *Patriot's* championing of Catholic and Liberal interests, especially in its first years of publication in the early 1830s when William Carson was involved with the newspaper.

<sup>55</sup>*The Reporter*, 26 June 1856.

Liberal principles. Talbot's connection with Parsons was not based on religion, but on shared political and commercial interests. Talbot and Parsons enjoyed mutual benefit in establishing *The Reporter*. Apart from any financial reward, most of what was published on Monday in the *Patriot* was generally repeated in *The Reporter* on Thursday, particularly editorial commentary, and both newspapers were distributed not only in St. John's but also in Conception Bay. In addition, Talbot, an astute observer of the political scene, and an able "brother of the pen," used every opportunity to praise his business partner in print. Parsons, the notoriously mordant editor of the *Patriot*, and a long-time member of the legislature, was a choice ally. Talbot, an Irish Catholic, and Parsons, a native Presbyterian who later became an Anglican,<sup>56</sup> shared no religious leanings. While Talbot's Irish Catholic heritage surfaced in *The Reporter*, Parsons was less predictable.<sup>57</sup> Both irascible personalities, their thinking seemed based more on stubborn righteousness and justice. Both were endowed with rhetorical skills enviable in politics, and in print, to make their personal views known publicly. These attributes, more than anything, likely brought the two together, as they did the earlier newspaper association of Nugent, Parsons and Carson. Such interdenominational alliances happened and sometimes cannot be explained by motives other than self-

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<sup>56</sup>Leslie Harris, "Parsons, Robert John," *DCB*, XI, 673-674.

<sup>57</sup>Harris, "Parsons." Harris noted Parsons's ability to step outside petty politics for a cause he perceived to be right and just. O'Flaherty saw Parsons as a man of 'doubtful allegiance.' See O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland*, 202. Both views can be interpreted similarly, and show that the rules could bend to suit the occasion or the cause.

interest, if they can be explained at all.

### 3.6

#### Business First

Among Protestant newspaper publishers as well, sharing a religious faith hardly meant a successful business relationship. The *Express* (1851-1876), the *Courier* (1844-1878), and the *Public Ledger* (1820-1882) were operated, or "conducted"<sup>58</sup> by Protestant publishers. The *Courier's* publisher, Joseph Woods, was Wesleyan, as was the proprietor of the *Express*, James Seaton, who had been editor of the *Courier*. The two could never agree, and Seaton left to join a partnership in the *Express* with J.T. Burton, whose *Telegraph and Political Review* (published at the same time) was occasionally referred to as a mouthpiece for the Church of England. At the *Public Ledger*, the elder Winton, a Congregationalist, was replaced by his son, Henry, in 1855.

Seaton's religion mattered less than the fact that he was an "outsider." He was described in the *Patriot* as a contemptible non-professional who had "adopt[ed] the 'trade' as a dernier resort to obtain a livelihood."<sup>59</sup> Talbot repeated the abuse,<sup>60</sup> despite the fact that he had done the same. More infuriating was Seaton's blatant advertising

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<sup>58</sup>The words, 'conductor,' or 'conducted' were in common use to describe a publisher or an editor and the work they did.

<sup>59</sup>*Patriot*, 26 May 1856.

<sup>60</sup>*The Reporter*, 29 May 1856.

of his printing services at cut-rates. Despite the fact that Burton, a "native son" long-established in the business, was known to be the printer of the *Express*, it was Seaton who was ridiculed in the *Patriot* --

He never went through the seven years' ordeal of a Printer's apprentice!... -- that he would...leap the fence of honour which guards the actions of Printers in matters of business, was not to be expected; and hence we find him undermining the profession in every way...to supplant the long-established Papers of the Colony.<sup>61</sup>

The nativist in Parsons took full flight whenever "outsiders" dared to compete for any official office, but particularly when they stepped into the publishing business.

Let the stranger and the so-journer's claim be paramount to the claims of the Children of the Soil! Let us understand this and the Natives of the Colony will speedily redress themselves!<sup>62</sup>

Parsons, of course, overlooked his own business relations with Talbot, also a non-native. Self-interest was a strong motivating force among journalist brethren.

In December 1856, Talbot complained that his subscribers in Conception Bay were not receiving his newspaper regularly. He accused the "agent" in Carbonear of "unhandsome procedure," suggesting government interference --

A government that attempts to check the progress of public opinion through agencies paid out of the taxes of the people must be met and dealt with in the open day, and in such a manner as befits the circumstances of the case.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>*Patriot*, 26 May 1856; *The Reporter*, 29 May 1856.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, *Patriot*, 26 May 1856; *The Reporter*, 29 May 1856.

<sup>63</sup>*The Reporter*, 11 December 1856; repeated as an editorial note 18 December, and 25 December 1856.

Let the subalterns of the government expect nothing at our hands but a resolute determination to resist the slightest infractions of duties which they are bound to perform not for this ministry or that ministry, but for the People who pay them.<sup>64</sup>

Talbot gave up the fight to maintain his own journal at this point; the 25 December 1856 issue of the *Reporter* (vol.1, no. 48) was apparently the last. Without government patronage, if for no other reason, he simply could not compete in a crowded market.

In the spring of 1857, Talbot, already acquainted with Bishop J.T. Mullock,<sup>65</sup> wrote to ask him for a teaching position at the newly established St. Bonaventure's College.<sup>66</sup> Talbot was then 20 years in Newfoundland. If he aspired to own his own newspaper and devote himself to journalism, he, like Nugent, had not been able to fit comfortably in the colony. Both were denounced by native journalists, such as Shea and Burton for their radical ideas and for inciting violence among the "lower classes." Talbot's brief partnership with Parsons can be understood as a business venture, or as politically advantageous to both, something Parsons would have courted. But Talbot did find another journalistic niche, appropriate to his new career as a schoolmaster, this time with the *Record*, an unmistakably Irish Catholic newspaper.

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<sup>64</sup>*The Reporter*, 25 December 1856.

<sup>65</sup>Correspondence between Talbot and Mullock, dated 4 July 1856, Mullock Files, 104/1/10, Roman Catholic Diocese Archive, St. John's.

<sup>66</sup>Letter dated 23 March 1857. See, Archbishop Mullock Files, 104/1/10, Roman Catholic Diocese Archive, St. John's.

### 3.7 The *Record*, Talbot, the Duffys, and Bishop Mullock

In addition to legislative reports, Talbot had also wedged into the *Reporter* extracts from Irish newspapers. One such article from the *Dublin Nation*,<sup>67</sup> praised Bishop Mullock of St. John's for bringing Irish publishers, Bernard Duffy and John Duffy to St. John's where they established a Catholic book store on Water Street.<sup>68</sup> The Duffys also published the *Record*, which ran regular advertisements for James Duffy's Catholic book shop in Dublin.<sup>69</sup> The purpose of establishing the *Record*, edited for a while by Talbot, and later by George Hogsett, a Catholic convert,<sup>70</sup> was to serve the St. John's market which contained a majority of Catholics. Yet the *Record*, without government support, was in circulation only for a short time, which raises the question of how strident were the religious currents.

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<sup>67</sup>The *Nation* was edited in Dublin by Charles Gavin Duffy between 1842 and 1855. It was noted for its Catholic and nationalist politics, and its influence on nineteenth-century journalism in Ireland. He sold his interest in the *Nation* in 1855 and moved to Australia. See, Hugh Oram, *The Newspaper Book: A History of Newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983* (Dublin: MO Books, 1983), 55-61, 59.

<sup>68</sup>*Reporter*, 25 September 1856.

<sup>69</sup>James Duffy of Duffy's Book Store, 7 Wellington-Quay, Dublin, ran regular advertisements in the St. John's *Record* on behalf of the Catholic Art Union of Dublin, which held ticket raffles for "superior altar pieces and religious engravings." See *Record*, 6 March 1862.

<sup>70</sup>The reference to Hogsett's conversion to Catholicism is cited by Eleanor Senior in her biographical sketch of Hogsett. See *DCB*, IX, 393-394. No other reference to his religious conversion was located.



In the 18 January 1862 issue of the *Record* (vol. 2, no.14, the first extant),<sup>71</sup> an advertisement appeared for the sale of "A Sermon by Rt. Rev. Dr. Mullock, Bishop of St. John's, Newfoundland On the Occasion of the Death of George Furey, brutally murdered at Cat's Cove, during the recent election for Harbour Main."<sup>72</sup> The sermon was published in pamphlet form and sold at Duffy's Book Store on Water Street.<sup>73</sup> On the same day the advertisement appeared, the first available copy of the Supreme Court report of the 1861 election riot at Cat's Cove and the pronouncement by the Attorney General on the re-election of Charles Furey and George J. Hogsett for Harbour Main was published on the front page of the *Record*. This coincidence gave credence to the claim by Winton and others that the *Record* was Mullock's "mouthpiece." But Mullock's frequent letters to the press on various issues were indiscriminately published in both "Catholic" and "Protestant" newspapers. It is somehow doubtful that Mullock needed a "mouthpiece."

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<sup>71</sup>Being a weekly newspaper, the first issue of the second volume would have been dated in October, 1861. Without knowing how many issues made up a complete volume it is difficult to determine the date of the first issue, nor is a prospectus or an affidavit extant.

<sup>72</sup>*Record*, 18 January 1862.

<sup>73</sup>The sale of sermons was common practice in the nineteenth century. Newspaper proprietors and publishers increased their revenue by "job-printing", and some, like J.T. Burton of the *Telegraph and Political Review*, also owned a book store, where sermons were offered for sale, and advertised in their own and other newspapers. See, e.g., *Courier*, 29 May 1869 ad for sale of set of Lenten sermons by Rev. Charles Rock West given at St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Salvage, Bonavista Bay in 1868. The sermons were available at Burton's book store on Water Street. Burton was a member of the Church of England.

The reaction of the "Catholic" press to the Cat's Cove riot is interesting and revealing, since the riot was not a Catholic/Protestant issue. The four candidates running for the two Harbour Main seats in 1861 were all Catholics, the voters were all Catholics, and local priests were involved. It was one of the most violent events in Newfoundland political history.<sup>74</sup>

Mullock had always advocated the development of communications. In 1860 he accompanied Philip Little, then Justice Little,<sup>75</sup> to New York to arrange a contract for a steam vessel to run north-south twice a month. Mullock was slighted when the Liberal Kent<sup>76</sup> administration refused to charter the vessel, and in a scathing letter to the press, denounced the government.<sup>77</sup> The Kent government collapsed, and a general

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<sup>74</sup>See Henry Winton Jr., *A Chapter in the History of Newfoundland for the Year 1861*, (St. John's, 1861). This pamphlet was published by the author and advertised for sale in his brother Francis Winton's newspaper, *Day Book*, 1 January 1862. See also Prowse, *A History*, 481-491; J.P. Greene, "The Influence of Religion in the Politics of Newfoundland, 1850-1861," (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1964); Frederick Jones, "The Church in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," *Bulletin of Canadian Studies*, 3-5, (1979-1981), 25-41.

<sup>75</sup>Little was Mullock's choice for Newfoundland's first prime minister who, in turn, felt he owed his position to Mullock and was sure he could not succeed politically without the bishop's influence. See Little to Mullock, 1855, Mullock Files, 104/1/9, RC Diocese Archive, St. John's.

<sup>76</sup>Kent owed much of his political success in Newfoundland to the support of both Fleming and Mullock, and was not averse to begging their approval. See Kent to Mullock, 1855, Bishop Mullock Files, 104/1/9, RC Diocese Archive, St. John's.

<sup>77</sup>Mullock's public address is cited by Prowse as a letter "To the Catholic people of the Diocese of St. John's" dated June 1860. See Prowse, *A History*, 486-487. It may be

election followed. Mullock then published a lengthy letter in the *Newfoundlander* defending the involvement of the Catholic clergy in advising parishioners how to vote:

...their anxiety is for the Security of their own parishioners; and not for their foreign creditors; they depend not for their maintenance on foreign funds or foreign Societies...they are not obliged to barter their independence for places for themselves or their friends...<sup>78</sup>

In Harbour Main district, tensions escalated between supporters of George Hogsett and Charles Furey, the slate favoured by Mullock, and the supporters of two other Catholic nominees, Patrick Nowlan and Thomas Byrne. A riot ended in the destruction of property and the death of George Furey, a relative of the competing candidate. Hogsett and Furey were returned under questionable circumstances, and another riot occurred in St. John's when they were allowed to take their seats. Governor Bannerman called out the garrison; shots were fired and several men were wounded and killed. The editor of the *Public Ledger*, Henry Winton Jr., described the riot in terms mindful of the 1840s as "priest's party and native party, all of the same

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that this letter was first published in the *Record*; Prowse did not provide a source. A similar letter from Mullock denouncing "the system" with which he said he knew his name was connected, was published in the 27 March 1861 *Telegraph and Political Review*, which Burton said he had copied from the *Record*, noting sarcastically that it had not appeared in Shea's *Newfoundlander*. Ambrose Shea was then a member of the government. Jones noted that all of the religious leaders were condemning of the Liberals by late 1860, seeing them as not only corrupt, but inept administrators. See, Frederick Jones, "The Church in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," 34.

<sup>78</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 25 March 1861. It is not known if this letter was also published in the *Record*, the first issue extant being 18 January 1862, vol.II No. 14.

ecclesiastical pale," whose sufferings had been "self-inflicted."<sup>79</sup>

Shea had little to say about the Cat's Cove riot in the *Newfoundlander*, except that "the place has been the scene of an awful murder... ." He admitted that the dispute had been between "Liberals on both sides" and hoped that "nothing will be left undone to lead to discovery and application of ample justice."<sup>80</sup> However, Shea maintained that the returning officer at Harbour Main had not been under duress to declare Hogsett and Furey, a curious statement, given the reports of assault, and later blamed the riot in St. John's on their "forced withdrawal."<sup>81</sup> Shea appeared to play both sides, as he later stated that it was the intervention of Judge Philip Little and Bishop Mullock who succeeded in calming and dispersing the crowds.<sup>82</sup> To the end of May editorials in the *Newfoundlander* criticized the calling out of the troops in St. John's. Substituting the military for civil authority was "repugnant to what is known as the sentiment of British Freedom." It was the "Government prints" that had tried to connect the Liberal Party to the Cat's Cove riots -- "the ascription is simply one of those notorious calumnies peculiar to that portion of the Press which feeds upon such food." The matter was then dropped. Subsequent issues of the *Newfoundlander* were

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<sup>79</sup>H. Winton Jr., *A Chapter in the History of Newfoundland*.

<sup>80</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 6 May 1861.

<sup>81</sup>Patrick Nowlan and Thomas Byrne were installed as members of the House of Assembly, and served a four-year term.

<sup>82</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 13 May 1861; 16 May 1861.

filled with reports of debates in the House of Assembly.

Bishop Mullock described what happened at Cat's Cove as an "outrage on religion and humanity," and saw fit to exclude all of the Catholics of the district from receiving the sacraments of the Church for 12 months. The proclamation,<sup>83</sup> dated 6 February 1862, was printed at the *Record* office.<sup>84</sup> The "outrage" would be news by any standard and was reported in all the local newspapers, possibly giving credence to the dangers of clerical involvement in political matters. Counteracting that idea, the *Record* reacted with an item from the *New York Tablet*, which propounded an Irish Catholic point of view,<sup>85</sup> warning Irish everywhere to be wary of those who would "set the clergy at a distance"<sup>86</sup>:

The Irish Clergy...are not confined to Ireland...There is scarcely a country in the wide extent of Christendom that has not some Irish priests to minister at its altars and edify the faithful by their pure and fervent faith -- the Catholics of

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<sup>83</sup>The proclamation from the bishop was not the same as a pastoral letter directed to members of the church, but a public announcement, intended for the information of the general population.

<sup>84</sup>The ecclesiastical ban made an exception for the dying, and for baptism in extreme necessity. See, Circular Letters 1862, Bishop Mullock Files, 104/1/40, Roman Catholic Archdiocese Archive, St. John's.

<sup>85</sup>The *Tablet* was described as a "Roman Catholic newspaper." See, *American Encyclopedia*, (New York, 1883), vol. XII, 343. The title may have been adopted from the *Tablet* in Ireland, whose editor, Frederick Lucas (1812-1855, MP, Meath), promoted clerical participation in political affairs, particularly the Tenant Rights movement of the 1850s. I am grateful to Newfoundland historian, Dr. John FitzGerald, for the references to Lucas in Matthias Buschkuhl, *Great Britain and the Holy See 1746-1870*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982) 87-8; 94-5; Appendix, 196-199.

<sup>86</sup>*Record*, 8 February 1862.

the New World are to a vast extent, under the "influence" of these same "Irish priests" -- they have the confidence and the warm affection of those millions of trans-Atlantic Irish on whose assistance our home-patriots (the anti-clerical spouters included) depend so much...<sup>87</sup>

It was a clear message to Catholics to heed their spiritual leader in all things, including politics. An editorial in the following week's issue of the *Record* warned that the new Conservative administration under Hugh Hoyles was only interested in protecting the rights of merchants, particularly Protestant merchants:

... all they aim at is to give the merchants a monopoly of everything connected with the trade of this country; and to force the people to be content with a state of destitution, or to abandon the country altogether... . They are not a government suited to the people... their whole pulsation beats in unison with the shibboleth, protestant, protestant, protestant; merchant, merchant, merchant...<sup>88</sup>

Whether these were the words of Talbot or Duffy is uncertain, but the tone and the intent is similar to that expressed in an anonymous letter to the editor in the same issue of the *Record*. It referred to a petition presented to the House of Assembly by John Casey, one of three Liberal MHAs for St. John's West -- the others were Henry Renouf and Thomas Talbot. The petition, on behalf of the *Record*, sought the appointment of Duffy as one of the publishers of debates and proceedings -- the vote was lost 16 to 10 --

The Cat's Cove members (or, as it is now and justly designated Cain's Cove) voting with the Orange faction!!!!... [and] members for St. Mary's

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<sup>87</sup>*Record*, 8 February 1862.

<sup>88</sup>The *Record*, 15 February 1862.

and Placentia... following their bright example!!<sup>89</sup>

In other words, some Catholic members, including Ambrose Shea (and the *Newfoundlander*) had denied the patronage. Infuriated, the letter-writer referred to all of them as "rotten members" --

Now Sir, I ask you in the name of common sense, how are Catholics of the Country to know what's going on in the House?...Can it be expected that we Catholics will look to the Orange rags which are daily issued here, for information?....Very few see them, and fewer still read them....<sup>90</sup>

The writer suggested that the *Record* was the "only Catholic organ in the Country," but it had been excluded by the "Orange clique," the intention of the "Hoyles-Bannerman party"<sup>91</sup> since its beginning:

H.W. Hoyles tells us that they have given the printing to a Catholic Newspaper!! Where, I ask, is that Catholic Journal? There may be such a one in name, but not in nature....<sup>92</sup>

This apparent reference to the *Newfoundlander* went on to admonish the Sheas for not promoting the progress of the Catholic Church in St. John's. Such newspapers, the

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<sup>89</sup>*Record*, 15 February 1862.

<sup>90</sup>*Record*, 15 February 1862.

<sup>91</sup>Hugh W. Hoyles has been described by Prowse, Frederick Jones, and other Newfoundland historians as a fair-minded man who worked hard to find a compromise among religious rights proponents of all faiths. Sir Alexander Bannerman was the Governor at the time, who had invited Hoyles to form a new administration.

<sup>92</sup>*Record*, 15 February 1862.

writer carped, were "not worthy of [government] support."<sup>93</sup> The letter may have been written by Duffy, who regretted that even the members for St. John's East, one of whom was Parsons, should have given the petition "the cold shoulder."

In its short life, the *Record* had made many enemies. Burton accused its editor, Talbot, of sectarian hate by inciting riots and attempted murder in Carbonear.<sup>94</sup> He had called on the Roman Catholics of the area to think about the consequences of "Talbot's mischief" and had urged Bishop Mullock to "compel him to cease."<sup>95</sup>

If ever man exerted himself in a bad cause, he [Talbot] has done his utmost to ensure fulfilment of the threat of the Harbour Grace Madman 'That Protestant blood should flow by gallons in the streets of Harbour Grace.'<sup>96</sup>

Henry Winton Jr. characterized the *Record* as a newspaper not for local readership but for the readers of "sympathizing newspapers abroad...advocating the causes of Ireland and the Catholic Church..."<sup>97</sup> He may have been correct because articles in yet another newspaper, the *Tri-Weekly Bulletin*, printed by J.R. Parsons and published at the *Patriot* office for a brief period in 1861, also bore the editorial

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<sup>93</sup>*Record*, 15 February 1862.

<sup>94</sup>*Telegraph*, 15 January 1862.

<sup>95</sup>*Telegraph*, 15 January 1862.

<sup>96</sup>*Telegraph*, 15 January 1862.

<sup>97</sup>H. Winton Jr., *A Chapter in the History of Newfoundland*, 25.



imprint of Talbot, though he was not identified.<sup>98</sup> Particularly insulting to Governor Alexander Bannerman and condemning of the Hoyles administration, it was also emphatically pro-Catholic. It carried articles from the *Limerick Reporter* and the *Tipperary Vindicator*, one of which cited the *Record's* account of the political riots of that spring.<sup>99</sup> The *Record* (and the *Tri-Weekly Bulletin*) was, as Winton suggested, reminiscent of the type of Irish Catholic nationalism employed in Lucas's *Tablet* and Gavin Duffy's *Nation* in Ireland, which, for the most part was said to be rejected by the Church of Rome,<sup>100</sup> something the younger Winton did not understand or chose to ignore. His assessment merely proved again how these impulses did not work in Newfoundland, and proved also that while Mullock desired a Catholic bookstore in St. John's, he had no real need for that style of journalism.

Clearly, the Duffy influence in St. John's did not compare with the Duffy influence in Dublin. Charles Gavin Duffy's influence was remarkable by all historical

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<sup>98</sup> Approximately 18 issues of the *Tri-Weekly Bulletin* between 4 April 1861 and 25 July 1861 are extant in the private papers of the Robert Bond Collection 237, Box 37, File 1.01.022, CNS Archive.

<sup>99</sup> *Limerick Reporter* extract in the *Tri-Weekly Bulletin*, 11 July 1861. Commenting on the reports of the riots in Newfoundland, the *Limerick* editor suggested that "the bloody idol of Orangeism is as exacting of human victims in Newfoundland as in Ireland ... ." See Bond Collection 237, Box 37, File 1.01.022.

<sup>100</sup> See, Buschkul, *Great Britain and the Holy See*, 87, n 41; Appendix, 196-199. See also Louise-Marie Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism, The Irish Provincial Press 1850-1892*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999) 54-55; and John O'Beirne Ranelagh, *A Short History of Ireland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 1990), 106-108; 131-132.

accounts, beginning with his *Belfast Vindicator* in 1839, the first 'Young Ireland' newspaper, which was vehemently Catholic and nationalist,<sup>101</sup> though fervour for the movement had subsided in Ireland before 1850. Also in Ireland, in the 1840s, O'Connell was a founding patron of the *Tipperary Vindicator*,<sup>102</sup> as part of his political crusade for Catholic rights. Taking into account Nugent's *Vindicator* of the 1840s, if that was an attempt to achieve the same religious nationalism in Newfoundland, the attempt seems to have been weak, at best. As Legg emphasized, the Irish liberal nationalist press had many *Vindicators*.<sup>103</sup> She also pointed out that O'Connell and the Catholic priests who supported him wanted an Irish Parliament that accommodated the laws of Westminster.<sup>104</sup> If Bishop Mullock was responsible for bringing the Duffys from Dublin to St. John's, it may have been simply to establish a book store for supplying Catholic artifacts and literature. No evidence was seen that Mullock intended to establish a newspaper.<sup>105</sup> It was undoubtedly a convenience to have the *Record* print anything he chose to say, but Mullock was never reticent about

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<sup>101</sup>Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, 18.

<sup>102</sup>Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, 41.

<sup>103</sup>Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, 18.

<sup>104</sup>Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, 24, 40-41, 94.

<sup>105</sup>Reportedly, most of Bishop Mullock's documents and correspondence were destroyed by an act of vandalism after his death in 1869. See R. Howley, "Irish Missionary Types -- The Right Rev. Dr. Mullock, O.S.F.," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Dublin, 1889, Vol. X, 12-27, 18.

expressing his opinions, political or otherwise, and most of the newspapers, regardless of their religious bent, were eager to publish them.

The *Record*, like the *Reporter*, *Vindicator*, *Indicator*, and *Tri-Weekly Bulletin*, had in common editors and publishers who were Irish Catholic immigrants working as journalists at the same time religious nationalism was at a peak in Ireland. None of them came to Newfoundland as journalists in the same way as Joyce described Irish immigrant newspaper editors who established markets in New York and Boston.<sup>106</sup> Talbot and Nugent were clearly connected with Mullock, and were two of the best educated and articulate journalists in Newfoundland. But they had come to Newfoundland as aspiring lawyers, not as journalists; they had turned to journalism as a means to an end, giving it up in pursuit of educational or political endeavours. In the case of the Duffys, the market for religious goods was likely small, perhaps non-existent outside St. John's. Their newspaper, the *Record*, was probably not supported financially by Bishop Mullock, hence their need for a government contract. Since they failed to secure one, nothing is seen of them after 1863; they most likely left Newfoundland for somewhere more rewarding. However, while they were in St. John's, they made the most of the religious tensions that arose in the early 1860s. Their journalistic style, and its possible purpose, could not survive among a

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<sup>106</sup>William Leonard Joyce, *Editors and Ethnicity A History of the Irish-American Press 1848-1883* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 104-105. The *American Celt* of Boston and New York had its counterparts in *The Celt* of Kilkenny, stridently nationalist, and *The Celt* of Waterford, also nationalist. See also Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism*, 23-24; 80-81.

conservative press fraternity that was mostly Protestant, but included native Catholics, such as the powerful Shea family. The Cat's Cove riot that erupted among a small group of Catholic communities may have encouraged the publishers of the *Record* to establish a local market, but it was also the beginning of the end of such mob violence. The fact that the *Record*, and the others, did not survive suggests Newfoundland was more a scene of gradual compromise than of revolution.

If the Catholic press reflected differences among Catholics, the Protestant press did the same. Thus the press reflected the distinctions between high and low Church, Anglicans and Dissenters, their educational issues, and what responsible government would mean for them. The press perpetuated the differences, continually shaping and re-shaping the society that all shared, whether they could read or not. In nineteenth-century Newfoundland, the press reflected more that portion of the population who could read and those, including religious leaders, who used the newspapers for political reasons.

### 3.9

#### Protestant versus Protestant

*Telegraph* editor, J.T. Burton's open support of the Church of England did not necessarily indicate a personal relationship with Bishop Edward Feild. An occasional pamphlet printed for the bishop at the *Telegraph* office might be construed as patronage, but as shown in Mullock's circumstance, it was not unusual for a bishop to

engage the services of a professional, who was also a member of his church.<sup>107</sup> Feild might have also called on John Williams M'Coubrey to print his pamphlets. M'Coubrey, owner and editor of the *Times and General Commercial Gazette*, appeared to have been a member of the Cathedral parish, and was even more eager to promote Feild's mission.<sup>108</sup> The *Times* recorded all of Feild's coastal missionary visits throughout the 1850s, and published reports of his meetings in the outports and in St. John's in the most glowing terms.<sup>109</sup>

Yet Burton's and M'Coubrey's connection with Feild, if it was close, was given nothing like the weight imputed to relationships between the Catholic hierarchy and Talbot, Parsons, Nugent, or the Sheas, and their respective newspapers.<sup>110</sup> The fact that Feild's activities, in contrast to Fleming's and Mullock's, were seldom reported in public prints, perhaps because of his aversion to publicity, might account for the difference. But he was concerned about the discussion of church matters in the local

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<sup>107</sup>Letter to *Committee, Newfoundland Church Society*, 30 October 1857, St. John's, J.T. Burton, 1857, Box 4, File 7, 100.43, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's, NF.

<sup>108</sup>Biographical information on M'Coubrey is scarce, but obituaries and notices of marriage in contemporary newspapers suggest a close connection with the Anglican Cathedral.

<sup>109</sup>In 1888, more than a decade after Burton had left Newfoundland, the *Times* claimed to be the "only organ" representing Anglicans.

<sup>110</sup>The Bishop Feild Files at the Church of England Archive in St. John's yielded little evidence of correspondence or other documents to show that Feild had any personal or political connection to newspaper publishers.

newspapers, and he placed great emphasis on maintaining a positive public image. He was fully aware of the potentially 'negative' influence of the press, and was able to count on Burton and M'Coubrey to create and maintain a positive image of the Church of England.

In the summer of 1850, M'Coubrey gave over the whole of his editorial space to a report signed "S.D.G." regarding the consecration of the new church at Burin --

[the] first in this diocese of a cruciform shape, and is, we understand, quite a model of beauty and convenience. The drawings were furnished by Mr. Hay and the windows... of ecclesiastic character quite new in this country were made under his directions. The whole work reflects great credit on his taste.<sup>111</sup>

This report of the introduction of Gothic architecture, associated with the Oxford movement in England, so new to Newfoundland outports, was received in the press with appropriate politeness. Likewise, in the fall of the year, reports about the consecration of the Anglican Cathedral in St. John's were considered by M'Coubrey of such interest and importance that he repeated them in subsequent issues of the *Times*.<sup>112</sup>

Reports of the Newfoundland Church Society also displaced editorials. In the spring of 1851, an address in honour and support of Bishop Feild from the Curate of the Cathedral and church wardens, along with the Bishop's grateful response, were

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<sup>111</sup>*Times*, 14 August 1850.

<sup>112</sup>*Times*, 25 September 1850; 28 September 1850.

published in the *Times*.<sup>113</sup> Messages of affection and loyalty to Bishop Feild were customary, such as one signed by several clergy, and "upward of 500 laity of Conception Bay."<sup>114</sup> Attaching a number, especially in triple digits, served a political purpose in maintaining a public image of harmony by an accommodating press.

Yet undercurrents of unrest existed, and centred around education.<sup>115</sup> In the summer of 1851, the rift between the Church of England and Dissenters over the subdivision of the government education grant escalated; even minor incidents were raised as public issues. For example, a letter to the *Times* from "Scotia" complained bitterly about the makeup of the Central Protestant Board of Education: three Episcopalians [Anglicans]; one Congregationalist; and one Methodist had been elected to the board. "Common decency," the writer said, "would... have suggested a Presbyterian be

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<sup>113</sup>*Times*, 7 May 1851.

<sup>114</sup>*Times*, 28 May 1853.

<sup>115</sup>For discussions of political and religious issues in education see Phillip McCann, "Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland, 1830-1850," *Religion and Identity: The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada*, eds. Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne (St. John's, NF: Jespersen Press, 1987), 81-97; Philip McCann, "Culture, State Formation and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland 1832-1855," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 23, 1988, 86-103; Philip McCann, "The Politics of Denominational Education in the Nineteenth Century in Newfoundland," *The Vexed Question: Denominational Education in a Secular Age* ed. William A. McKim (St. John's: Breakwater Books 1988), 30-59; Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz, eds., *Creed and Culture: the place of English-speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* (Montreal, Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). See also Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*, 192-93; 235-40.

added."<sup>116</sup> A year later Anglicans protested against their portion of the grant being shared with Dissenters. For instance, a letter to the *Times* objected to splitting education funds with "those who would teach children that the Episcopacy is contrary to Scripture, and that individual Bishops are adherents to the Scarlet Lady!"<sup>117</sup> These letters read as if they were written by clerics, people with canonical knowledge, not ordinary parishioners, and reflected other disputes as well.

In 1853, a letter describing Newfoundland Episcopalians as "infected with the heresy commonly called Puseyism," surfaced several months after its author, Presbyterian Rev. Adam Muir, had left Newfoundland. Though it was a private letter, M'Coubrey said it was handed to him "for publication" and published it to expose it for its "impuden[ce]"<sup>118</sup> M'Coubrey later published a second letter, written two years earlier, dated September, 1850, signed "Truth" which defended Anglicanism against the sentiments of Methodist John Brewster who called for more work in Twillingate to bring people "out of the darkness into light." "Truth" argued that Church of England ministers had been resident in Twillingate for many years and that the ministry was "open to all," -- Green Bay and Twillingate were "not that dark and lawless as this gentleman wants to make out." Other letters debated various religious rites and practices such as the credence table and the distribution of communion, topics more

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<sup>116</sup>*Times*, 18 June 1851.

<sup>117</sup>*Times*, 4 June 1853.

<sup>118</sup>*Times*, 19 February 1853. The Muir letter was dated November, 1852.



suited to trained clergymen than to the average person.<sup>119</sup> It appeared that M'Coubrey brought these concerns only now into public view to defuse a greater public feud about to break in the *Courier*.

Between 1850 and 1853 some members of the Church of England on the south coast of the island were at odds with Anglican missionaries. In May and June 1851 letters of complaint appeared in the *Guardian*, a religious monthly magazine published by Joseph Woods, editor/publisher of the *Courier* newspaper.<sup>120</sup> The complaints which also caught the attention of the *Public Ledger* editor, referred to the Anglican clergyman at Lamaline, who had re-baptized persons already baptized by a Wesleyan missionary. The editor of the *Courier*, a Wesleyan, charged that Dissenters were being "grouped with Infidels and Atheists," and suggested that Bishop Feild had sanctioned the "outrage."<sup>121</sup> Thomas Collett, a magistrate at Harbour Buffett, one of the aggrieved parishioners, claimed he had reported several grievances to Bishop Feild but had been ignored. In 1853, Collett decided to make public his correspondence with Feild, and

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<sup>119</sup>See e.g., *Times*, 9 July 1853; 13 July 1853; 13 August 1853.

<sup>120</sup>The prospectus for the *Guardian* was published in the *Weekly Herald*, Harbour Grace, 8 January 1851. The full title was, *Newfoundland Guardian and Christian Intelligencer*. The prospectus described it as a monthly magazine to be devoted to moral and religious subjects bearing on the important questions of the day. It was to be printed and published at the office of the *Morning Courier*, Joseph Woods, proprietor and publisher. The format in which the magazine was distributed is not determined. It may have been published in pamphlet form as a monthly publication. A bound copy for the year 1851 is extant.

<sup>121</sup>*Courier*, 22 December 1852.

with the Governor. A staunch low-church Anglican, it is telling that he chose Woods to publish these letters in pamphlet form as it was unlikely that either Burton or M'Coubrey, both supporters of Feild, would have taken the print job. Moreover, it was expedient for Woods to take advantage of a public rift between low-church evangelicals and high-church Tractarians within the Church of England at a time when Wesleyans/Methodists were growing in strength. The pamphlet was titled:

The Church of England in Newfoundland As Indicated In A Correspondence Between Thomas Collett Esq., J.P. And The Lord Bishop Of Newfoundland And The Rev. W. K. White, A Missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Beaufet,<sup>122</sup> in Placentia Bay. Also: Some Evidence in Proof of the STATEMENTS: With A Few Additional Facts From Various Sources Shewing the Tractarian Tendencies of Some of the Missionaries of the SOCIETY Under the Countenance of the Ecclesiastical Authorities

The preface shows that Collett wanted to make the issue public and chose a newspaper publisher willing to accommodate him.<sup>123</sup>

In submitting the following correspondence and documents for the perusal and consideration of the Members of the Church, Mr. Collett has no other object than to bring before their view the anti-protestant practices which are allowed to prevail in the Colonial Church in Newfoundland...hitherto unchecked...if not supported by the

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<sup>122</sup>The spelling, Harbour 'Beaufet' is in original documents; the spelling later changed to Harbour Buffett.

<sup>123</sup>The only printing presses in Newfoundland at the time were owned and operated by newspaper proprietors. Even so, given that Woods also published the *Guardian*, he was fully aware of the controversy, and may have encouraged publishing the letters as a pamphlet.

countenance, of the Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Island.<sup>124</sup>

In his letters, the first dated 26 December 1849, Collett complained about the Reverend William Kepple White, who refused to baptize his grandchildren because their fathers had not contributed the annual tithe of a quintal of fish. Two months passed before Bishop Feild replied, and then "at length, because I am aware of your influence at Harbour Beaufet," but only to uphold White's action.<sup>125</sup>

The exchanges escalated, and became more condemning by Collett of Tractarian influence. He included testimonials from several residents of Placentia Bay, and brought the matter to the attention of the governor, Sir Gaspard Le Marchant. By involving the governor, Collett forced Bishop Feild to respond more precisely. Bishop Feild's response to the governor, also published in the 1853 pamphlet, showed clearly how seriously Collett's action was taken:

I have seen Mr. Collett at Harbour Beaufet...I need hardly say that I shall be quite prepared to hear Mr. Collett's statement if such be your Excellency's wish, but your Excellency should be informed that Mr. Collett has already published the alleged fact *in the newspaper*, which is quite sufficient to ensure my enquiring into the circumstances, in justice to Mr. White.<sup>126</sup>

The public attention drawn to the dispute in the press was of great import to Bishop

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<sup>124</sup>Bishop Feild files, 100.43, Box 4, file 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

<sup>125</sup>Feild to Collett, 26 February 1850, File 100.43, Box 4, file 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

<sup>126</sup>Feild to Sir Gaspard LeMarchant, May 31, 1851, 100.43, Box 4, File 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

Feild and to the Church of England. The newspaper publication of the dispute took on further importance for the Reverend White. A letter to Collett, dated from the parsonage in Harbour Beaufet on Christmas Eve, 1852 (also published in the 1853 pamphlet), made it clear that Rev. White thought that the newspaper publicity had compromised the Church. It would "destroy Christian peace and unity" if he were to admit the aggrieved parties to Holy Communion. By now, these people had received the sacraments from the Wesleyan Minister, effectively becoming Dissenters. Rev. White remained unmoved:

When you have publicly withdrawn your charges against the bishop...and myself...and published the same in the St. John's newspapers; and when yourself and the parties you named, declare that they have ceased to be Dissenters and are ready to pay their church dues, I shall be most happy to receive them, but until this is done I cannot.<sup>127</sup>

The newspapers in St. John's were now at the centre of the dispute. The restoration of the sacraments to the protesting parishioners apparently hinged on a recanting, one that had to be published in the St. John's newspapers. The public image of the Church of England in Newfoundland depended, at least in this case, on how the issue was treated in the newspapers.<sup>128</sup> The dispute, however, went on for almost three

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<sup>127</sup>White to Collett, *Parsonage, Christmas Eve*, 1852, 100.43, Box 4, File 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

<sup>128</sup>Some of the newspapers that carried letters or editorials, and extracts regarding the Harbour Buffet parishioners' grievances were: the *Times*, 30 August, 1851; the *Public Ledger*, 23 April, 1851; 12/19 August 1851; the *Guardian*, April and May 1851; the *Courier*, 1853.

years, with intermittent letters to editors of several newspapers in St. John's. These newspaper reports undoubtedly found their way to England as well as to the outports. One letter addressed to the *Guardian* from Lamaline on the Burin Peninsula, dated 22 March 1851, told of the "illiberality exhibited" by a "Church clergyman"<sup>129</sup> in Grand Bank who refused the sacraments if parishioners did not subscribe to the new Church building fund.<sup>130</sup> Compulsory tithes and elaborate ceremony, features of Tractarian, or high-church rituals foreign to outport life, forced unwelcome changes in habits of worship. Before Bishop Feild's arrival in 1844 parishioners had enjoyed the more simple evangelical low-church Anglican faith, whose priority was hearing the Gospel, and they were loathe to give it up. Passive obedience to authority was a mark of Christian forbearance. "Fear God and Honour the King," a motto often used in newspaper banners,<sup>131</sup> was a deeply held tenet of Christian faith, a rule not to be broken. Having Collett on their side, a respected authority appointed by the

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<sup>129</sup>The term, "Church clergyman" referred to clergymen of the Church of England, or the Established Church of England which did not have the same legal status in Newfoundland, but was perceived as such by the people generally. O'Flaherty states that the Church of England was made the 'de facto established church' in Newfoundland by Governor Osborn in 1729. See, O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland*, 93.

<sup>130</sup>See File 100.43, Box 4, file 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

<sup>131</sup>"Fear God and Honour the King" was the motto in the banner of the *Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser*, the first newspaper published in the Island (1807), and essentially a government gazette. It was later called the *Royal Gazette* (1892), and still later the *Newfoundland Gazette* (1924-). See Ellison, *Historical Directory*, 104.

government, must have strengthened the protestors' resolve to confront the Anglican hierarchy.<sup>132</sup>

The role of the press in the Harbour Buffett incident is significant. It served to show how deep and lasting were the divisions among the Protestant peoples. The newspapers provided the forum for debate, especially those whose owners had a vested interest in dissension from the Church of England.<sup>133</sup> In Newfoundland, that mission had been aided in large measure by Congregationalist and Methodist newspaper proprietors who helped 'spread the word' and who were as dedicated to the effort as were the clergy of all faiths to create a Christian society. Christianity, however, did not preclude political power, profitable industry, or cultural hegemony in Newfoundland's denominationally defined society. After all, steam navigation, a railway, and a good road system were as important to church leaders for spiritual development as they were for economic development; harvesting souls was as important as harvesting minerals, or even fish.

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<sup>132</sup>In a letter to Rev. H.P. Disney, dated 27 April 1851, Collett made it clear that he was also "known to many respectable persons in St. John's [and] deem[ed] it due to [his] character that it should be relieved from any unfavourable impressions upon their minds..." See 100.43, Box 4, file 5, Church of England Archive, Diocesan Synod Office, St. John's.

<sup>133</sup>Although Terrence Murphy's work does not focus on the role of newspapers in the evangelical movement, he noted that John W.D. Gray, rector of Trinity Church in Saint John, New Brunswick founded the *Church Witness* newspaper to attack his Tractarian adversary, Bishop Medley. See Murphy, "English Speaking Colonies to 1854," 187.

Religious interests were advanced in the press by Catholics, Talbot, and Nugent; and Anglicans, Burton and M'Coubrey. The elder Winton served no master but displayed fear of Catholic ascendancy and bitter distaste for clerical involvement in public affairs. His sons, of lesser stature, were of the same views. The Sheas, though Catholic, steered a middle course, protective of their political and business interests. R.J. Parsons's and William Carson's alliances with Catholics were politically, not religiously driven. Woods stood out as scrupulously dedicated to advancing Methodist interests that were also economically and politically anchored.

By the end of the century the various denominations no longer needed the support of newspapers, and newspapers no longer represented religious interests as they had in the past. But their relationship had been important in the formation of the Newfoundland press, and its examination reveals the subtleties and complexities of Newfoundland society in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Through a selection of episodes, this chapter has demonstrated that religion underscored political life in Newfoundland which, in turn, was fundamental to the way journalism was produced. It was in the individuality, the personal dictates of conscience of the publishers and editors, that the journalism of the day found its source. Despite sectarian "hatred," they still presented themselves as moral, Christian men who moved on to issues of poverty and temperance as the next engrossing newspaper crusades for social improvement.

Chapter Four: Newfoundland Newspapers and the Temperance Movement:  
'Civilizing Voices' of the Nineteenth Century

## 4.1

## Introduction

Calabogus, a drink concocted from rum, spruce beer, and molasses, was said to be a favourite of the fishing admirals around Newfoundland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Beer brewed from spruce wood and molasses was reportedly best in cold climates. But rum and molasses was "the liquor drunk by servants."<sup>1</sup> In the 1600s Sir David Kirke insisted that tavern owners in Ferryland pay taxes.<sup>2</sup> Fishermen reportedly spent much of their wages and/or shares on drink which led to stealing from their employers.<sup>3</sup> Orders posted at the 80 or more public houses in St. John's failed to suppress drunken disorder, and a petition to the House of Commons in 1775 from merchants, boat keepers and "principal inhabitants" of St. John's, Petty Harbour, and Torbay called for a reduction to 12 of the number of tavern licences.<sup>4</sup> In 1862, a report from Elias Rendell, the collector of revenue on the coast of Labrador, published in the *Royal Gazette*, stated:

The extensive sale of Spirits, without Licence, or payment of Duties, by

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<sup>1</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 136; 226; 273.

<sup>2</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 157.

<sup>3</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 168.

<sup>4</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 342-343.



the Nova Scotians and Americans who resort to that coast, is much complained of; they carry a cheap, bad article, with which they supply the servants in the fishery, to the great damage and injury of their employers, who have not the slightest remedy against the evil; thus the Revenue is defrauded, and the fishery injured at the same time.<sup>5</sup>

Though not unique to Newfoundland, the "demon rum" was a problem of long duration. The gradual increase in the number of clergy and the growth of organized religion and moral persuasion in the nineteenth century eventually addressed the problems of drunkenness. Class, sectarian, economic, and political interests of reformers conditioned the motives of temperance.

Only two publications, both in St. John's, were officially dedicated to temperance, and so identified in their titles -- *Banner of Temperance* and the *Temperance Journal*. These publications were not examined in great detail. The bi-weekly *Banner of Temperance* (1851) was short-lived, and the *Temperance Journal*, which began as a bi-weekly in 1868, and as a weekly in its last two years, has only incomplete runs of issues available for 1878-80 and 1885-87. These publications are more pertinent to a specific study of the temperance movement.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter traces the beginning of the temperance movement in

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<sup>5</sup>*Royal Gazette*, 17 June 1862.

<sup>6</sup>The *Water Lilly*, officially registered 14 January 1892, listed the Christian Women's Temperance Union as publisher, and was especially devoted to women's suffrage. One issue is extant in a private collection. See also Ellison, *Historical Directory*, 175.

Newfoundland to a cooperative mainstream press in St. John's and Conception Bay, whose newspaper editors, with strong religious convictions of their own, helped organize and promote it. First championed by Protestant publishers, the movement helps to explain the increase in the number of Protestant Dissenters in this period, but it extended to other denominations. Temperance meetings were a form of social integration and recreation, but Roman Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan, and Congregational beliefs and practices dictated sectarian differences within the temperance movement which were reflected in and perpetuated by the various newspapers. These newspapers leave a record of the temperance movement at its height from the late 1830s, to the mid-1850s, after which its strength began to decline, though a revival occurred in the 1870s.

This chapter discusses the direct involvement in the movement by publishers and editors and suggests that the subject of temperance helped sustain a readership for several decades; was part of the so-called liberal politics of the day; and, combined with the religious and cultural transfers from Britain and America, may offer, at least in part, a reason for the number of newspapers published in the island in the first half of the nineteenth century when temperance activity flourished. Letters to the editor show that temperance was one topic that created a lively interaction among readers and the mainstream press, particularly in Conception Bay newspapers, which may account for a large measure of success for the movement. The role of the press was

important to the decline in public drunkenness. However, the persistence of temperance as an issue throughout the century shows that the press was more influential in raising public awareness than eliminating the habit of drinking.

#### 4.2

#### Public Drunkenness: A Public Issue

In the winter of 1844, the editor of the *Morning Courier* lamented the death by drowning in St. John's harbour of 22 year-old John Boyle who "came to his death by intemperance." A melancholy fate, the editor said,

... that should serve as a warning to all who happen unfortunately to be addicted to this vile propensity and should induce them at once to renounce their evil ways, and enroll themselves members of the Temperance Society.<sup>7</sup>

Drunkenness was a serious public issue in the nineteenth century. It created economic and social problems affecting both commercial and domestic life, and offending norms of middle-class respectability. Reform groups sought a solution. Temperance was seen as the reasonable approach to drunkenness, suggesting moderation of drinking habits generally, but more emphatically, a total abstinence from alcohol. Thus did the temperance movement direct its efforts to the currents of social change that went hand in hand with political reform in the nineteenth century. Such reform groups were

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<sup>7</sup>*Morning Courier*, 11 November 1844.

defined by, commented upon, and often organized within the newspaper press.<sup>8</sup> It was a process of civilizing -- the conscious act of communicating ideas by way of publicity of the printed word, authoritative in itself, to bring about social order.<sup>9</sup> The channel of communication was the newspaper press which afforded temperance discourse large amounts of space. Temperance organizations usually had the patronage of the governor, always worthy of publicity, and the consequence of the "evil habit" was elaborated in first-person accounts, serial fiction, verse, letters to the editor, and moralizing editorials.

Religion permeated almost every aspect of this developing society, and was a sustaining feature in the journalism of the day. One of its functions was to identify the "evil" retarding society's progress -- "*and its name is Drunkenness*."<sup>10</sup> Sobriety was the remedy essential for economic as well as moral progress. Moral reform began with temperance, and moral reformers included religious leaders, particularly evangelical

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<sup>8</sup>James Carey made this point for a later period in his essay, "The Mass Media and Democracy Between the Modern and the Postmodern," *Journal of International Affairs* 47, no. 1 (Summer 1993): 1-21.

<sup>9</sup>In his study of the role of twentieth-century news media in the 'social construction' of environmental issues, or, put another way, the construction of the environment as a social problem, Anders Hansen discussed the 'authority-orientation' of media and the 'cultural givens' of [a] society which both facilitate or limit coverage of particular issues. See: Anders Hansen, "The media and social construction of the environment," *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol.13 (1991), 443-458.

<sup>10</sup>*Times and General Commercial Gazette*, 6 February 1833.

Protestant clergy, government officials, businessmen, and also a certain number of newspaper publishers and editors. For example, James Seaton, editor of the *Morning Courier, Times, and Express* at various times between 1846 and 1876, gave public lectures in St. John's on temperance.<sup>11</sup> Francis Winton, editor of the *Morning Chronicle* and the *St. John's Daily News* between 1860 and 1881, while a member of the House of Assembly, campaigned for temperance legislation, and helped organize temperance societies. James Murray, journalist and editor connected with the *Evening Telegram*, was also directly involved with the *Temperance Journal* in the 1870s. P.T. McGrath, editor of the *Evening Herald*, was secretary of the St. John's Temperance society in the 1890s. William Charles St. John, owner and editor of the *Weekly Herald*, was an executive member of the temperance society in Conception Bay and enrolled his children in the junior branch of the organization. For some of them temperance was an every-day issue, almost a reason to publish; their journalism a 'nagging conscience,' 'a civilizing voice.' They helped to organize and often led the campaign.

## 4.3

## Temperance History

Very little has been written on the history of temperance in Newfoundland. Jan

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<sup>11</sup>*Courier*, 1 November 1845; 21 January 1846.

Noel's study of the temperance movement in Canada<sup>12</sup> briefly includes Newfoundland in the context of the four Atlantic provinces, and in an ill-informed and stereotypically condescending phrase, describes the colony as "the strongest example of archetypical backwardness steeped in spirits."<sup>13</sup> It is especially disappointing that she did not discuss the role of the press in the temperance movement.

This is not the case in the far stronger studies that exist for Ireland and England. Colm Kerrigan's study of the temperance movement in Ireland centres on Father Theobald Mathew, the temperance crusader who appealed successfully to the working classes, and who inspired reformers on both sides of the Atlantic, (including Newfoundland).<sup>14</sup> Many Irish newspapers were devoted to temperance, though Kerrigan states there were few teetotallers among Irish newspaper proprietors.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that the issue of temperance lent itself to stimulating publicity. Irish newspapers reported daily thousands of workers on pilgrimages to Cork to take the

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<sup>12</sup>Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusade Before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup>Noel, *Canada Dry*, 19-22.

<sup>14</sup>Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement 1838 - 1849* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992). Note that Noel acknowledges Mathew's broad appeal in British North America.

<sup>15</sup>Occasional remarks in some Newfoundland newspapers hint at inebriation among newsmen, especially among the Wintons of the *Public Ledger*, but there is little firm evidence regarding the drinking habits of the newspaper owners and editors in Newfoundland.

pledge directly from the idolized Father Mathew.<sup>16</sup> Kerrigan notes Mathew's insistence that the temperance movement should be politically non-partisan -- he banned the *Pilot*, Daniel O'Connell's "mouthpiece," from temperance reading rooms in Cork.<sup>17</sup>

Brian Harrison's seminal work emphasizes the nineteenth-century temperance movement in England as a social and cultural marker.<sup>18</sup> Much of his descriptive analysis applies equally to the movement in Newfoundland. More importantly, Harrison's work focuses on the role of newspapers in temperance culture and suggests that it would be wrong to dismiss temperance journalism as "yet another absurdity born of 'Victorian' moral earnestness." In his study of what he called a "small but significant section of the British press between 1830 and 1872," he showed how the temperance movement through its newspaper press had helped to create what became

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<sup>16</sup>Kerrigan, *Father Mathew*, 75. Daily newspapers were produced in Ireland in the eighteenth century. The *Belfast News-Letter*, first published in 1737, was still in print in 1999. See Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers And Nationalism*, 13.

<sup>17</sup>Kerrigan, *Father Mathew*, 117.

<sup>18</sup>Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1971). See also, Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815 - 1872*, 2nd edition, (Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1994). See also, Ian Tyrell, "Tasks and Achievements of Alcohol and Temperance Historiography," Jack S. Blocker Jr. and Cheryl Krasnik Warsh eds. *The Changing Face of Drink* (Ottawa: Les Publications Histoire Sociale/ Social History Inc., 1997) 382-401.

known as "Gladstonian Liberalism."<sup>19</sup> This was, after all, the period in England of the Anti-Corn Law League, of free trade rhetoric, and of radical reformers such as newspaper men Cobbett and O'Connor. Reform targets included land ownership, religious freedom, dissension from the state church, demands for wider suffrage, and freedom of the press.

Harrison sets these reform movements within the context of aristocratic rule.

The major function, then, of the reforming newspapers was to

...force propaganda on areas where inaccessibility or hostility deterred the itinerant lecturer...and on individuals whose social background deterred them from attending temperance meetings.<sup>20</sup>

Newspaper reporting of temperance lectures alleviated the cost of sending lecturers around the country, while the printed temperance message made for lively newspaper competition.<sup>21</sup> The "ponderous speeches, wordy articles, [and] windy correspondence"

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<sup>19</sup>Brian Harrison, " 'A World Of Which We Have No Conception' Liberalism and the English Temperance Press: 1830-1872," *Victorian Studies*, (December, 1969) 125-158. The point made here is not that William Gladstone favoured temperance legislation; but that the reform movements of the 1830s produced journalists with strong temperance backgrounds, such as Joseph Livesey, William Saunders, and E.F. Collins, whose ideas were taken up by Gladstonian Liberals.

<sup>20</sup>Harrison, *ibid.*, 128. Only one account of an "itinerant lecturer" was located for Newfoundland. Isaac Morris identified himself as such in the 1890s, and complained that newspapers at that time had lost interest in the temperance movement. See Isaac Morris, *Sketches of Our Western Sea Coast* (St. John's, NF: George G. Milligan Jr., 1894).

<sup>21</sup>Harrison, *ibid.*, 129. Kerrigan also addressed this point.



filled columns to the advantage of publishers; constant publicity suggested its importance; and created a sustained interactive newspaper discourse. Reform also encompassed education, as the counterbalance to intemperance which was frequently blamed for economic hardships.<sup>22</sup> It was considered a good idea to plant the seed early, hence, the Band of Hope, founded in England in 1847 to train children in the habits of sobriety as a practical guide for living. Kerrigan, too, discussed intemperance as the cause of economic hardship in Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s, and taking the pledge as proof of reform.<sup>23</sup> In the 1850s the temperance movement in Britain became political as moral persuasion led to attempts at legislated prohibition. Medical, as well as religious, intellectual and political worlds were drawn into the debate over the "evils of drink."<sup>24</sup> Abstinence promised an "earthly utopia that a drink-free world would at last realize."<sup>25</sup>

Newfoundland did not have a temperance press as formidable as that of the British Isles where population alone might have warranted a separate temperance press. However, newspaper publishers generally took their cues from the British and

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<sup>22</sup>Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 148.

<sup>23</sup>Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew*, 54-63.

<sup>24</sup>Harrison, "A World of Which We Had No Conception," 155-156. No evidence was seen of direct involvement by the medical profession in the temperance debate in Newfoundland.

<sup>25</sup>Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 33.

American presses, and a 'temperance press' is identifiable in reports of temperance meetings, and verbatim accounts of temperance lectures. It is especially identified through the close ties between certain newsmen and the non-conformist, or dissenting churches, though it was a staunch Anglican editor who first promoted it in the 1830s. Catholic newspaper men took up the cause in the 1840s when Bishop Fleming expressed an interest.

## 4.4

## Initial Signs

In Newfoundland those interested in temperance looked first to Great Britain for inspiration. The first published appeal appeared in 1833 in a letter to the editor of the *Times* from "A Friend." It suggested that the success of temperance societies in the British Isles could be repeated in Newfoundland.<sup>26</sup> A second letter appeared the following week, with a notice of a public meeting to found a temperance society.<sup>27</sup> A third letter reported a "respectable and numerous attendance" at the event.<sup>28</sup> The editor's personal involvement can be deduced. On 6 February 1833, M'Coubrey gave front page coverage to a lecture on intemperance as a disease, delivered three years earlier at Greenock by James B. Kirk, the senior surgeon at Greenock's Hospital and

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<sup>26</sup>*Times*, 9 January 1833.

<sup>27</sup>*Times*, 16 January 1833.

<sup>28</sup>*Times*, 23 January 1833.

Infirmary, and Lecturer on Chemistry to the Institute of Arts and Sciences.

The publicity given the Kirk lecture had its effect. On 20 February 1833, the *Times* reported the official founding of the Newfoundland Temperance Society.<sup>29</sup> The enthusiasm aroused at the meeting might be measured by a spontaneous proposal to re-name Newfoundland "Temperance Island" -- a name that "might, in future, be fitting to its character, and that its children might be the Sons of Temperance, carry the flag of Temperance as far as our commerce extended."<sup>30</sup>

The connection between temperance and commerce was not unusual, as promoters of temperance were also prominent among the leaders of the colony's commercial life. Names such as Job, Bulley, Knight, Barnes -- all Protestant Dissenters -- are only a few examples. In keeping with the spirit of the gospel, they sought to explain the "human weakness" for alcohol. Newfoundland's inclement weather, for example, was sometimes offered as reason enough for men to require strong drink, especially when at sea. It was noted, however, that warm coffee laced with nutmeg had been tried on board several vessels, "even at this bitter season of the year with the most encouraging effect."<sup>31</sup> Conversely, the weather was a good reason not to turn to hard liquor; the dangers of inebriated crew members losing control of vessels were

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<sup>29</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833.

<sup>30</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833.

<sup>31</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833.

obvious. The Congregationalist minister, Thomas Wood, told a gathering about a fisherman found in the bottom of his boat "in a state of bestial insensibility," the boat drifting "with sail spread and without any hand to steer her." The fisherman's drunken mate had fallen overboard, "intoxicated with another man's rum which they were carrying in the boat."<sup>32</sup>

Numerous examples of the "evil of drink" were repeated at temperance meetings and reported in the newspapers. So moving were those testimonials from the outports that the Newfoundland Temperance Society passed a resolution to make the Port de Grave temperance executive honorary members, and issued them an invitation, by way of their newspaper report, to attend society meetings whenever they were in St. John's.<sup>33</sup>

Newspaper editors were lauded for supporting temperance objectives and advancing the movement. One society member insisted a resolution to that effect be included in its official report. Although the press had been "equally open to objectors, as it had been to those who favoured the principles of the Society...[not] a single paragraph was calculated to check its rising usefulness." The weekly press, it was

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<sup>32</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833.

<sup>33</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833. It was not uncommon that organizations formed in St. John's, although not representing the colony as a whole, adopted the name of Newfoundland. The Port de Grave Temperance Society appears to have been formed earlier than the branch in St. John's, yet adopted the name of the community.

noted, had devoted "a portion of their columns...to the weakening and demoralizing effects of the prevailing use and abuse of intoxicating liquors" as a service to the public.<sup>34</sup> Occasional acts of violence directed at temperance meeting places were given prominent newspaper coverage, with rewards offered to catch the offenders.<sup>35</sup> Any disturbance of the peace was generally said to be the result of intemperance.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, reports of a decrease in crime were attributed to the persuasive message of temperance.

The goal of temperance advocates was to instruct and be instructed. The newspaper, specifically the so-called non-political newspaper of the first half of the nineteenth century, was the best means of spreading the word.<sup>37</sup> Temperance rhetoric included more than alcohol abstinence. It promoted the ideology of sobriety that

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<sup>34</sup>*Times*, 20 February 1833. Evidence suggests that notices of temperance meetings and subsequent reports were published free of charge. This alone, signifies the value placed on temperance both personally by the publisher, as well as its value as a drawing card for readers and contributors.

<sup>35</sup>*Times*, January through March, 1833.

<sup>36</sup>See for example, a letter to the editor, *Weekly Herald* 8 January 1851, signed "X Y Z" deploring an attack in the street on the Governor by a troupe of drunken Mummies, and an editorial, *Morning Courier*, 1 June 1850, describing as wanton the vandalism on Christopher Ayre's property at Portugal Cove Road. The editor, Joseph Woods, hoped the perpetrators would "take the pledge" if they could not be found and put in gaol for a month "for the good of their constitution."

<sup>37</sup>Newspaper reports would not have compared to fiery speeches heard at meetings, but the reports and commentary reached larger numbers of people, including those who could not read, in various ways.

embraced peace and harmony through submission to authority. It assumed the basic Christian principle that Christ was the ultimate authority, and all others in authority had a grave responsibility. The "press" as a collective authority, and the "best educator of the day," a common phrase in newspaper discourse, was obliged to set an example and remain aloof from partisan politics, perhaps an unrealistic objective, given the religious and political differences rampant in the press.<sup>38</sup>

## 4.5

## Official Blessing

The temperance movement had long had the approval of government officials. Governor Sir John Harvey, who permitted his personal coat of arms to be displayed on the flag of the Carbonar Temperance Society in the 1840s, was particularly supportive.<sup>39</sup> Harvey also made sure his support of temperance in Newfoundland was properly understood in London. In a letter to Lord Edward G. Stanley, the colonial secretary, he welcomed the introduction of temperance associations in St. John's, and described processions of "ten thousand persons including one thousand women and children ...[in] high health and perfect contentment and good humour...[and]of all

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<sup>38</sup>Kerrigan also made this point relative to the fundamental rule of Mathewites to remain politically neutral.

<sup>39</sup>See e.g., *Times*, 2 August 1843; 21 February 1844.

religious persuasions."<sup>40</sup> Political ramifications might easily be imagined if Protestant and Catholic temperance groups took their rival tendencies to the streets with the added spirit of marching bands. Harvey had spent time in Ireland (1828-36) as a police inspector<sup>41</sup> and was undoubtedly aware of the connections made there between temperance and sectarian politics.<sup>42</sup>

Harvey clearly wished to receive credit for the improved atmosphere in the colony. His reputation as a conciliator brought him to Newfoundland in 1841 on instructions from Stanley to impose electoral reform in order to quell the hostility in the legislature, much of which was influenced by religious tensions.<sup>43</sup> But the temperance movement had swelled to include Roman Catholics in St. John's, and the newspapers were filled with reports of the "glorious events." No one had informed the governor prior to the published reports. Concerned that London would disapprove, he dispatched a note to Stanley:

I am induced to place before your lordship some notices of very numerous Roman Catholic Temperance Processions...which I learned

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<sup>40</sup>CO 194/16, Harvey to Stanley, 7 January 1843. I am grateful to Dr. Phillip McCann for this reference to Harvey's correspondence.

<sup>41</sup>See P.A. Buckner, "Sir John Harvey" *DCB*, VIII, 374 - 384.

<sup>42</sup>In 1840 the *Galway Advertiser* threatened to withdraw support of the temperance movement because of reports of political infiltration. See Kerrigan, *Father Mathew*, 114.

<sup>43</sup>Buckner, "Sir John Harvey." O'Flaherty suggested that Harvey was "less a conciliator than a glutton for applause." See O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland*, 197.

only from the public papers -- I lost no time in communicating...with the clergymen respectively presiding over the Protestant and Roman Catholic Temperance Societies...<sup>44</sup>

Harvey was anxious that the Colonial Office know of his efforts to bring these groups together and that the temperance movement in Newfoundland might be a neutral means of achieving that goal. He would need as well the cooperation of the newspapers to keep him informed. Stanley had once been burned in effigy by Galway teetotallers,<sup>45</sup> and may have needed the assurances offered by Harvey that the temperance processions took place without

...a shadow of offence or objection either to the authorities or to any class of Her Majesty's Subjects in this community -- a fact to which the report and details given in the Colonial papers bear ample testimony and from which it will be the best feelings...naturally manifested, and is, I think much good been done.<sup>46</sup>

The governor obviously saw the value of newspapers in promoting and organizing the temperance movement. He also knew that the favourable publicity he received in the local newspapers could only help his career. In turn, the governor's patronage undoubtedly encouraged editors and gave impetus to temperance journalism. Harvey was also aware that his superiors in London knew of the movement's progress there and that cultural transfers were inevitable. Nowhere were these transfers more visible

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<sup>44</sup>CO 194/120, Harvey to Stanley, 9 January 1844.

<sup>45</sup>Kerrigan, *Father Mathew*, 114.

<sup>46</sup>CO 194/120, Harvey to Stanley, 9 January 1844.



than in the development of newspaper journalism. The temperance movement was an important factor in that development.

## 4.6

## Restraint and Suspicion

As commercial enterprises, newspapers could ill afford to lose subscribers or advertisers. It is not clear that advertisements for cocoa or other non-intoxicating beverages were more evident in pro-temperance newspapers, but the editorial commentary that railed against spending money on drink was consistent fare as a way of educating people. This was certainly true of W.C. St. John, J.W. McCoubrey, and Henry Winton Jr. They shared a "self-help ideology" preached by temperance lecturers -- "eulogies of cleanliness, sobriety, and integrity...attacks on swearing, gambling, and sporting."<sup>47</sup> Whether temperance lectures were by local leaders, or reprinted from foreign newspapers, the message was always the same. The reporting of temperance lectures undoubtedly alleviated the cost of sending lecturers around Newfoundland where few roads existed. Where only a few newspapers were delivered by mail boats, the message could still be extended to a wider audience, even where illiteracy was widespread. It is clear from the eagerness with which editors welcomed reaction to

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<sup>47</sup>Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 142. See random examples: *Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 25 April 1838, 24 June 1840; *Newfoundlander*, 16 October, 12 November, 1840; *Weekly Herald and Conception Bay General Advertiser*, 27 June 1847, 4 December 1850; *Banner of Temperance*, 1 February 1851; *Twillingate Sun*, 8 July 1880, 25 October 1884.

these printed speeches and sermons that the temperance message also made for lively newspaper competition. Pro-temperance newspapers also promoted the Band of Hope for children from the earliest days of the movement. The youth of the Colony were urged to adopt an "utter abhorrence of intemperance."<sup>48</sup> As temperance on both sides of the Atlantic led to teetotalism, and teetotalers took a more militant approach, the same occurred in Newfoundland. Editors such as St. John, a Wesleyan, Woods of the *Courier*, also a Wesleyan, and the Wintons, Congregationalists, were among the most passionate advocates.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast, John Thomas Burton, the Anglican proprietor and editor of the *Star and Conception Bay Journal*, was reticent about the movement until the spring of 1840, when he said he was obliged to respond to an increasing number of letters from his "Temperance readers."<sup>50</sup> However, given Burton's occasional anti-Irish Catholic

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<sup>48</sup>*Times*, 23 January 1833.

<sup>49</sup>In the early 1870s, Francis Winton, then a member of the House of Assembly, travelled with Rev. Thomas Hall of the Congregational Church to explain the Temperance Bill which Winton and J.J. Rogerson had introduced in the Legislature. See St. David's Presbyterian Church Centennial History Committee, *The Dissenting Church of Christ at St. John's 1775-1975* (St. John's, NF: Creative Printers, 1975 (?)), 86. Henry Winton Jr., who published the *Public Ledger* after the death of Henry Winton Sr., and who also published the *Banner of Temperance*, was Deputy Grand Patron of the Cadets, the youth division of the Sons of Temperance. See *Banner of Temperance*, 15 March 1851.

<sup>50</sup>The *Star and Conception Bay Journal* was first published in Carbonear by the private school master, D.E. Gilmour in 1833. Burton apparently assumed sole ownership in 1834, and was editor until 1840 when he closed down the newspaper and

content, the letters he claimed as authentic were filled with sarcasm. One letter suggested an inventory of known drunkards, incarcerations and grog shops,<sup>51</sup> along with a list of clergy who preached the cause of temperance be presented to Father Mathew on his expected arrival in Newfoundland.<sup>52</sup> Another letter, signed "Peregrinus," claimed that more than 120 immigrants wearing "the honourable and sacred insignia of Temperance" had arrived in the Colony from Ireland. This, the writer said, would "spread terror and confusion among the 'lovers of drink.'" Sobriety in Ireland, the letter suggested, had reached such a level that a drunken Irishman was regarded worse than "Satan himself;" that publicans had "universally 'shut shop' and returned to their former avocations of carpenters, shoemakers, tailors and the like."

Happy Ireland! When shall we resemble thee! Oh that the great and illustrious Mathew would hasten to visit us; for truly the harvest is plenteous *but the labourers FEW*.<sup>53</sup>

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moved to St. John's to start the *Star and Newfoundland Advocate* and later, the *Telegraph and Political Review*, for which he was proprietor, publisher, and editor until 1875, when he moved to Montreal.

<sup>51</sup>Most of the newspapers published reports from the courts which often included the numbers incarcerated for public drunkenness. An increase or decrease in those numbers was used as a measure for the level of intemperance at any given time. The *Banner of Temperance* provided statistics for the year 1850, stating that 100 persons were incarcerated each month for drunkenness. It reported that in the first month of 1851, only 30 were in gaol for the same offence.

<sup>52</sup>No evidence was found that Father Mathew visited Newfoundland, despite references to his proposed arrival in several newspapers.

<sup>53</sup>*Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 29 April 1840.

Still more letters in the *Star* described in colourful detail a St. Patrick's Day parade through Kilkenny, made up not of those expressing "their love for old Ireland by getting 'gloriously' drunk, but the Followers Of Father Mathew -- The Teetotallers Of Erin, *headed by their Priests.*" The letter, signed "Philo-Mathew," suggested that the Kilkenny procession served as a "delightful example for us to follow...henceforward in sincerity and truth."<sup>54</sup>

Burton may have had reason to be sceptical. In the fall of 1841, William S. Comer, proprietor and editor of the *Conception Bay Mercury*,<sup>55</sup> wrote a scathing editorial condemning Father Cumming, a Roman Catholic priest, for allegedly discouraging Catholic men in Conception Bay from joining the temperance movement.<sup>56</sup> Comer claimed that Cumming was "acting on his own -- his sole, unsupported, unauthorized *dictum*..." and not by an order of the Church. He suggested that because Father Cumming was in Newfoundland he felt he could

...do with impunity whatsoever he will; had he been in Ireland and acted thus, he would have *been silenced by his superiors -- shunned by his co-equals, and deserted by his flock.*<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>*Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 13 May 1840.

<sup>55</sup>William Comer's sister, Elizabeth Suzannah Comer, was the wife of W.C. St. John. See MF-320, W.C. St. John, biographical note, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>56</sup>*Conception Bay Mercury*, 11 September 1841.

<sup>57</sup>*Conception Bay Mercury*, 11 September 1841.

Comer's editorial was carried the following week in Burton's *Star*.<sup>58</sup> About a month later, the *Newfoundlander* newspaper in St. John's reported that after the last Mass on the previous Sunday, Bishop Michael A. Fleming administered the "pledge" to "a number of persons of both sexes," and had appointed Father Walsh to take charge of the 1,400 persons who had "presented themselves for enrollment."<sup>59</sup> This report was reprinted by Burton in his St. John's newspaper, the *Star and Newfoundland Advocate* two days later.<sup>60</sup>

The first evidence of interest in the temperance movement by the *Newfoundlander*, appeared in 1840 in reference to the movement in Ireland, where Father Mathew was preaching to all classes and religions in "spacious buildings to nearly suffocation," followed by the poor and sick as if he had divine power to heal. A revolution had taken place in Ireland, the report said, with almost 200 public houses in Dublin shut down, 100,000 teetotallers joined by another 50,000 enrolled by Father Mathew on his tour through the city.<sup>61</sup> Similar extracts from the *Dublin Evening Post* appeared, but passed without comment. While the *Newfoundlander* remained somewhat

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<sup>58</sup>*Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 18 September 1841.

<sup>59</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 14 October 1841.

<sup>60</sup>*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 16 October 1841. The earliest available issue of Burton's St. John's newspaper is 14 November 1840, Vol. 1, No.2.

<sup>61</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 14 May 1840.

aloof, it could hardly ignore temperance activity in Ireland, which had caught even the attention of the Protestant newspapers and the British Parliament.<sup>62</sup> But the Sheas left the more pervasive moralizing journalism to others whose style it suited.

## 4.7

## Temperance Crusader W.C. St. John

William Charles St. John stood out among his contemporaries as the least politically partisan and most dedicated advocate of temperance. For these reasons, the Wesleyan publisher and editor of the *Weekly Herald and Conception-Bay General Advertiser* (1842-1854)<sup>63</sup> deserves special attention.

W.C. St. John of Harbour Grace was first and foremost an educator and a practising Christian; temperance seemed a natural part of such a disciplined life. He was an outspoken crusader who provided the message regularly and consistently in his own newspaper. The immorality of drinking alcohol and its debilitating effect on Newfoundland society was a constant subject of letters to the *Weekly Herald*, more than in the other newspapers.

Early in 1847, the Newfoundland government was negotiating a loan of £200,000 from Britain. In a letter to the *Weekly Herald*, "Teetotaler" suggested that

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<sup>62</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 26 March 1840.

<sup>63</sup>Hereinafter referred to as the *Weekly Herald*. St. John shut down the newspaper in 1854 and moved to Boston where he was involved with publishing and editing the *International Journal* and the *Anglo Saxon European and Colonial Gazette*.

instead of borrowing from the "parent government" the inhabitants of St. John's should stop drinking and contribute 6d per day for two years. At 15,000 inhabitants, he surmised, a fund of £219,000 could be realized.<sup>64</sup> Temperance rested on that kind of logic. Another letter, signed "True Blue," questioned the ethics of the *Morning Post and Shipping Gazette*.<sup>65</sup> "What think you of this case," the writer asked, "a paper avowedly devoted to Temperance," accepting ads for the sale of "spirituous liquors" more than "in any other print."<sup>66</sup> St. John responded in an editorial note, diplomatically and humbly. Not wishing to "condemn...another for that which our conscience upbraids us with having been guilty of ourselves," he acknowledged his own participation in the sale of alcohol through his advertising columns.<sup>67</sup>

Reformation, however, is never too late, and we hereby pledge ourselves in the face of the public that a charge of this nature shall never be against the *Herald* again.<sup>68</sup>

That summer, he reaffirmed his pledge and reminded his readers and advertisers that

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<sup>64</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 February, 1847.

<sup>65</sup>The *Morning Post and Shipping Gazette* was started in St. John's in 1843 by William James Ward of Halifax in partnership with Joseph Woods. The two parted acrimoniously in 1846. Ward remained with the *Post*; Woods took over the *Morning Courier*.

<sup>66</sup>This may have been an exaggeration which only a content analysis of every newspaper could confirm.

<sup>67</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 19 January 1848.

<sup>68</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 19 January 1848.

he was no longer accepting ads for spirits of any kind.<sup>69</sup> Such advertisements included those placed by packet boat owners serving wine and spirits to on-board passengers. However, the progress of temperance was such that competing boat owners advertised a "dry" service, easily identified by temperance flags flying from their masts. The loss of one ad was thus replaced by another so that the stand taken by St. John had little negative effect on his newspaper.

By 1849 temperance revivals had increased in Newfoundland, especially in St. John's. A multi-decked headline in the *Herald* echoed reports in the *Morning Post*, the *Courier*, and the *Newfoundlander*:

Temperance Revivals  
Reorganization of the Metropolitan Societies  
Imposing Demonstrations  
Resuscitation and Combined Efforts of *Metropolitan Press*<sup>70</sup>

The report made it clear that temperance was the key to prosperity. "Trade, Industry, and Happiness"; "Triumph of Temperance, Piety, Union, and Peace" were the mottos on banners paraded through the streets. Many of the marchers were fishermen, distinguished by the striking red sashes "crossed over their shoulders." They carried a Fisherman's Flag,<sup>71</sup> on one side depicting "the miraculous draft of fishes," and the

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<sup>69</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 28 June 1848.

<sup>70</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 January 1849.

<sup>71</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 January 1849.



words from Genesis 9:2, "All the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand." On the other side was a portrait of St. Peter with the motto, "Be Sober and Watch." A separate flag bore a portrait of Father Mathew.<sup>72</sup> Shoemakers, tailors, shopkeepers marched together under the unofficial Native Flag, the pink, white, and green banner of Newfoundland with the biblical inscription, "What is the world if we lose our own souls." Young boys had a special place in the procession, carrying a white flag heralding "Fruits of Temperance."<sup>73</sup> Throughout 1849 the *Herald*, and other newspapers supporting temperance, featured hymns "to the drunkard," and poems such as:

Licensed? to do what?  
 To make strong men weak?  
 To lay wise men low?  
 To fit men for a hell below?<sup>74</sup>

Letters to editors continued to deplore drink and to ridicule those who gave in to the temptation. Some, using, by now, the familiar logic of economics, called for a tax on manufacturers of spirits. In the spring of 1849, a letter signed "A Mathewite" was addressed to prominent wealthy businessman Charles Fox Bennett,<sup>75</sup> criticizing

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<sup>72</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 January 1849.

<sup>73</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 January 1849.

<sup>74</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 31 January 1849.

<sup>75</sup>See James K. Hillier, "Bennett, Charles James Fox " DCB, XI, 65-69.

him for operating a distillery and grog shop in St. John's.<sup>76</sup> Temperance "picnics" were arranged to lure men to a more wholesome recreation.

Newspaper editors rarely enjoyed a diversion from politics and religious strife, poor crops and bad voyages. Temperance provided them a chance to fill their columns during the summer lull with eloquent descriptions of the numerous summer picnics. In a "spacious field, delightfully situated on the brow of a hill, and surrounded by a thick grove of firs," the junior members of the Harbour Grace Total Abstinence Society arrived in procession carrying banners, the largest having a full length portrait of Father Mathew. The site for the picnic was the Brennan family farm. William and Mrs. Brennan, were both teetotallers, a letter writer said, and praised Mrs. Brennan for her "endless profusion of trays." Magistrate Pinsent addressed the youth in the open field on that warm summer day where they all stood and offered a toast from "the cup that cheers but not inebriates" to teetotallers "all over the world."<sup>77</sup> In St. John's, the *Public Ledger* reported a Temperance Society picnic held at Bally Halley complete with the garrison band. Other reports boasted of elaborate arrangements of large tents carried to Upper Long Pond on the outskirts of St. John's where hundreds walked to

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<sup>76</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 30 May 1849. Note that the temperance movement in Newfoundland did little or nothing to reduce Bennett's brewing business or the number of "grog shops" in St. John's.

<sup>77</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 29 August 1849. Pinsent's teenaged son, Robert, future knighted supreme court judge, was likely one of the temperance cadets in the crowd.

hear several speeches.<sup>78</sup> The sound of the temperance band, "symbol of pride and a unifying force in the movement" signified the harmony that temperance brought to society and reminded members of their commitment to the cause. Supported by newspaper editors of like mind, the message was far reaching. These summer temperance picnics were legend. St. John reported all, believing they

socialized communities...[that] individuals drinking in the same sounds and breathing the same air, forget their petty differences, and imperceptibly approach each other in thought and feelings.<sup>79</sup>

#### Women Acclaimed

As Noel also noted, temperance was not the sole domain of men.<sup>80</sup> Though somewhat invisible, women had long been involved in social improvements. Editors' wives and daughters, as well as those of the clergy were involved in many women's volunteer organizations in Newfoundland. Henry Winton's daughter, for example, was secretary of the Dorcas Society.<sup>81</sup> In the fall of 1851, the *Courier* in St. John's reported

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<sup>78</sup>*Newfoundlander*, July 1851; *Weekly Herald*, 10 September 1851.

<sup>79</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 29 August 1849.

<sup>80</sup>Noel, *Canada Dry*, 11.

<sup>81</sup>*The Dissenting Church*, 64. The Dorcas Society was founded in 1824 by Sarah Ward, wife of Rev. D.S. Ward of the Congregational Chapel in St. John's. Branches of the Dorcas Society were later formed in Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Twillingate. See *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 1, 637. The Dorcas Society operated in Newfoundland until the mid-1970s.

the establishment of a branch of the Daughters of Temperance.<sup>82</sup> The report was carried in most of the newspapers; the *Weekly Herald* editor showered praise on Mrs. Peace, one of the organizers, whose poems were published in several Newfoundland newspapers. Her involvement, St. John said, would do much good in the

war against the fashionable vice of society...God knows it is woman, after all, that has the deeper stake in this momentous struggle. The silent tear and lacerated bosom fall to *her* lot.<sup>83</sup>

St. John considered women's cooperation essential if society was to be reformed. Their role was clear:

...it is to woman that childhood looks for support, manhood for happiness, age and infirmity for consolation, and [those facing death], for strength.<sup>84</sup>

This deference to women courted some enthusiastic subscribers in St. John's whose letters appeared on the front page of the *Herald* announcing that "the tree of Temperance had taken root in Newfoundland":

[Temperance] speaks to mothers -- sisters -- with you lies the power of persuasion for good or for evil...This is the age of dispatch...steam, electricity, and moving powers in the physical world, so temperance is the motive power in the moral world...the telegraph will carry the news [of temperance] to every cove, to every harbour of our Island, playing like lightning flash upon uneducated minds of

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<sup>82</sup>*Courier*, 20 September 1851. The names published as officers were Mrs. Peace, Miss Neal, Mrs. Ritchie, Mrs. Bulley, and Mrs. Hutchings.

<sup>83</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 1 October 1851.

<sup>84</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 1 October 1851.

hundreds of our fellow countrymen now nurtured in the lap of ignorance.<sup>85</sup>

Such support could only have encouraged St. John who openly chastised rich and poor alike for their habits of drink, not only on moral, but on economic grounds. In the summer of 1851 he noted that 500 grampuses [whales] were taken by New Harbour fishermen in Trinity Bay, averaging about £4 each:

It is to be hoped that profits would go for bread and clothing for the winter season...turned to good -- instead of laid out in the purchase of rum...[it] would mean no more applications for Indian meal... they may rest assured the *Herald* will be unsparing in its *exposure* if it find next winter that an opposite course has been pursued ...<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.8 Editorial Temperance Network

Local editors' preoccupation with temperance was closely tied to promoting temperance literature from abroad. The *Scottish Temperance Review*, for example, was advertised for sale at A&R Blackwood's in St. John's.<sup>87</sup> Placed next to the ad were extracts from a published address of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland suggesting that intemperance had become a "national characteristic." The appeal to "pride of country" confronted everyone, not just the private individual. The *American Temperance Magazine*, published in New York, was advertised in the

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<sup>85</sup>*Weekly Herald* 16 July 1851. The letter from St. John's was dated 7 July 1851.

<sup>86</sup>*Weekly Herald* 13 August 1851.

<sup>87</sup>*Courier*, 28 October 1846.

*Herald* as "always available" for sale at Mr. Wylde's Bookstore in St. John's. St. John was proud to say he was a subscriber and encouraged all of his readers to do the same. The September issue of the magazine, he said, was especially useful to

the teetotaller, who, while abstaining himself feels no apprehension of the 'woe' pronounced against 'him who putteth ... *the bottle to his neighbour*.'<sup>88</sup>

The message of temperance was aimed at the masses; "monster meetings" called everyone into the streets. Reports of processions in Toronto "observed by 20,000" in 1851 were carried in many newspapers, including the *Weekly Herald* in Newfoundland.<sup>89</sup>

The "Protestant Divine," Rev. Mr. Skinner, at the Warren Street church in Boston paid a tribute to the "Apostle of Temperance," Father Mathew, and it was reported on the front page of the *Weekly Herald*.<sup>90</sup> It was one of many exchanges St. John made with newspapers in Boston where he claimed the *Herald* was read regularly.<sup>91</sup> Several Newfoundland newspapers carried excerpts from the *Life of John Gough*, a "reclaimed drunkard" turned temperance lecturer in the United States,

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<sup>88</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 1 October 1851. The *American Temperance Magazine* was also advertised in the St. John's *Banner of Temperance*. See *Banner of Temperance*, 5 July 1851.

<sup>89</sup>*Weekly Herald* 30 July 1851.

<sup>90</sup>*Weekly Herald* 10 September 1851.

<sup>91</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 3 September 1851.

described by St. John as "the Father Mathew of America"<sup>92</sup> St. John boasted that the *Weekly Herald* was filed with news distributors, Messrs Simmonds & Co., in London, England, "circulating among a population of 50,000." He also claimed to have subscribers, or at least occasional readers, in Quebec and Montreal.<sup>93</sup> Temperance news from these locations was given prominence in the *Herald*, and also in the fellow Wesleyan *Courier*.<sup>94</sup> Such reports, promoting a single cause, exchanged among newspapers so widely dispersed, suggest a temperance network of editors operating in the publishing trade.

An extract from the *Prince Edward Island Advertiser* described a "monster demonstration on Government Grounds" in Prince Edward Island and bragged of the wealth among temperance members there.<sup>95</sup> The dedication of the new Temperance Hall in Halifax "capable of accommodating 1600 people" and reported in full by the

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<sup>92</sup>Harrison noted Gough's influence in England from 1853 onward. Gough was said to be a dynamic animated speaker -- "blaz[ing] away...like a brilliant comet" -- who captivated London philanthropists. See, B.H. Harrison and Barrie Trinder, "Drink and Sobriety in an Early Victorian County Town Banbury:1830-1860," *The English Historical Review* (London: Longmans, 1969) Supplement 4, p.27.

<sup>93</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 1 October 1851: An editorial note on page two, bearing the iconographic pointing finger, said, "Our friends at Quebec and Montreal will receive our best thanks for their continued attentions."

<sup>94</sup>The whole of the front page of the *Morning Courier*, 30 May 1846, was devoted to the Halifax annual temperance meeting with the complete list of executive members and reports of social improvements.

<sup>95</sup>*Banner of Temperance*, 21 June 1851.

*Herald*<sup>96</sup> echoed similar wealth in Nova Scotia. Harbour Grace already boasted a Sons of Temperance Hall of its own, if not so large as the one in Halifax. To St. John, it marked the forward movement of temperance in Conception Bay. It was, he said, of equal, if not greater importance than the introduction of the telegraph, gas light, steam, or improved postal service which seemed of little value without a commitment to a sober and earnest life.<sup>97</sup> The sod-turning ceremony took almost the whole of the editorial page, arguably justified if only because of the prominent business people connected with it.<sup>98</sup> Magistrate Robert John Pinsent laid a commemorative stone and gave a brief history of the rise of temperance throughout the world. Headmaster John Irving Roddick deposited a scroll and addressed the crowd on the contrast between the "exploits of the most renowned heroes of antiquity and the sublime achievements of Rev. Theobald Mathew." The names of major merchants and government officials -- Munn, Brace, Trapnell, Ellis, Cram, Moore, Payne, Emerson, Drysdale, Withycombe, and Higgins, all Protestant, most nonconformist -- made up the list of temperance marshals and officers. St. John was a trustee of the new building, along with William

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<sup>96</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 17 September 1851.

<sup>97</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 30 July 1851.

<sup>98</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 10 September 1851.



Munn, and John Roddick,<sup>99</sup> and was also designated "Worthy Administrator" in the society.<sup>100</sup> A donation of five guineas, made by merchant Thomas Ridley, went towards a library and a paid librarian for the new hall.<sup>101</sup> Roman Catholics in Conception Bay were conspicuous by their absence.

The Harbour Grace Sons of Temperance offered the "double advantage" of a total abstinence society and a benefit society.<sup>102</sup> This "rapid and steady growth" was attributed to the "incessant appeals" of the press, and according to St. John:

... Intemperance in this town will be uprooted. To this consummation, devoutedly to be wished by every good citizen, has a portion of the Press incessantly laboured for many years past, aided from time to time

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<sup>99</sup>William Munn was a member of the Munn merchant supplying firm. [Archibald Munn purchased the *Harbour Grace Standard* newspaper in 1873, and it remained under Munn family control until 1936.] John Roddick, a Presbyterian, was headmaster of the Harbour Grace Grammar School. Other prominent wealthy men involved with temperance through the Congregational Church in Newfoundland were Robert Job, Joseph Noad, and William Solomon. Noad and Job served on the Legislative Council until 1854. Job was married to the daughter of William Carson. Solomon was Postmaster, closely connected with the newspapers, and married to the daughter of Henry Winton, publisher of the *Public Ledger*.

<sup>100</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 10 September 1851. There is reason to speculate on the coincidence of W.C. St. John's appointment as agent for the Life Assurance Society which may have been connected with the Temperance movement, and the raising of money to build the Sons of Temperance Hall in Harbour Grace. His close connection with the other entrepreneurs mentioned here adds to the speculation. However, only further research into the history of temperance in Newfoundland might establish such evidence. It was not explicit in W.C. St. John's newspaper reports.

<sup>101</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 19 November 1851.

<sup>102</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 26 March 1851.

by the quiet but effective support of approving brethren ...<sup>103</sup>

A "portion" of the press may certainly have been supported financially by "approving brethren", one of whom was John Munn, a wealthy Conception Bay merchant. Munn gave lectures on temperance, and was described in the *Weekly Herald* as liberal, public-spirited, and philanthropic.<sup>104</sup> It is not possible to suggest that the *Weekly Herald* was started in order to promote temperance, the Christian gospel, and education, but from 1845 to 1854 when St. John left Newfoundland, these were the main interests propounded in his newspaper.<sup>105</sup> It might be argued that the conscience-bound St. John, who refused ads from liquor vendors, may have lost other advertisers as a result. It was a position any newspaper owner in such a very small market would

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<sup>103</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 4 June 1851.

<sup>104</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 4 June 1851. St. John hints at but does not say outright that his newspaper had financial support from pro-temperance businessmen and the Sons of Temperance. It is not necessarily the case that his newspaper was financially supported by any of the local entrepreneurs, since it is clear that W.C. St. John was a man of means in his own right. In St. John's, it was rumoured that the newly-published *Banner of Temperance* was under the auspices of the organization, but this was denied by its proprietor, Henry Winton, Jr. See *Banner of Temperance*, 27 September 1851.

<sup>105</sup>The *Weekly Herald and Conception Bay General Advertiser* began publication in 1842 according to the only source available, the *Star and Newfoundland Advocate*, 11 November 1842. See Ellison, *Historical Directory*, 176, n 57. Holdings on microfilm start from 1845, precluding examination of the first three years of publication.

be hard-pressed to risk.<sup>106</sup> Whether or not it precipitated or combined in some way to cause his departure from Newfoundland to Boston in 1854 is unlikely, as temperance had become a common cause.

#### 4.9

#### Toward Political Action

By 1854, the issue of intemperance had taken on a broader social appeal. Nourished over a period of 25 years by a supportive newspaper press, temperance had undoubtedly taken root in Newfoundland by the 1850s. For example, a winter festival sponsored by the Sons of Temperance in St. John's, was reported to have had a "numerous and respectable attendance." The word 'respectable' referred to such people as John Bemister, MHA, who chaired the event, "supported nobly" by T.C. James, agent for the port of St. John's whose packet brig, *Magnet* was then "displaying the Temperance Signal."<sup>107</sup> A letter to the *Weekly Herald* noted that 1400 people had signed a petition to bar the transportation of liquor to the colony. An editorial correction placed directly beneath the correspondence declared that 2800, not 1400, had signed the petition, and added that 500 had recently taken the pledge, "some of

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<sup>106</sup>Official newspaper circulation figures for the nineteenth century are not extant. References to circulation claims in the newspapers are rare and unreliable.

<sup>107</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 15 February 1854.

whom were spirit dealers."<sup>108</sup>

Following W.C. St. John's departure from Newfoundland, much of the temperance zeal in newspapers of the previous two decades declined. His absence likely contributed to the decline, but it did not signal the demise of the issue of temperance. Joseph Woods of the *Courier*<sup>109</sup> continued to support the cause, issuing the "good news" with enthusiasm. The passion for moralizing did not subside, but politics, especially the establishment of responsible government in 1855, international trade treaties, and talk of Confederation had become the more seductive forces. Attempts at establishing daily newspapers through the 1860s and 1870s were also evidence of a more politically sophisticated society. A distinctive shift occurred between the 1850s and 1860s. Temperance, at least in its moderate form, had, by then, been embraced by all of the churches, and was absorbed within the larger society. The evangelical Protestant newsmen, perhaps more than anyone, had accomplished much. The concentrated newspaper crusade for temperance was over; although Joseph Woods of the *Courier* grew more in favour of total abstinence in the years ahead. The temperance cause was also taken up by newly established newspapers in the late 1870s

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<sup>108</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 8 March 1854.

<sup>109</sup>St. John was the authorized agent in Boston for the St. John's *Courier*. See *Courier*, 8 October, 1864. Advertisements for the sale of *Poems by Charles Henry St. John* ran in the *Courier*. The book was available at bookstores in St. John's. Charles Henry St. John moved to Boston with his father, W.C. St. John in 1854.

and 1880s. The Sons of Temperance organization included many community leaders as well as newspaper publishers and editors.

## 4.10

## Morals versus Business

In 1865, three "tea rooms" opened where refreshments and newspapers were supplied for patrons in St. John's and for "visitors from the outports."<sup>110</sup> But temperance tea rooms had economic ramifications for businessmen engaged in the 'spirits' trade, some of whom were also leading political and commercial figures. In 1865, a letter to the editor of the *Courier* stated that some liquor shop operators had shut down for want of business.<sup>111</sup> Whether the cause was due to the strength of the temperance movement or because of the high tariff charged on imported spirits is not known. But the social improvement that the press had helped to achieve with a zealous temperance campaign had perhaps unexpected repercussions. The rumour surfaced in the press that rum smuggling had become such a problem that legislators were about to lower the import tax as a preventive measure. Such a move would also benefit the liquor vendors. Letters from the most avid temperance advocates expressed outrage. "Teetotaler" suggested that the decrease in tax from six shillings to three shillings per

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<sup>110</sup>Sons of Temperance advertisement, *Courier*, 28 January 1865.

<sup>111</sup>*Courier*, 17 March 1865.

gallon would not prevent smuggling on the Western Shore and in Labrador.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, it would increase the amount of spirits brought into the country. Quoting figures reported by the Receiver General, "Teetotaller" suggested that the 127,596 gallons of gin, whiskey, wine, rum, exclusive of ale and porter, imported to Newfoundland each year, in addition to what was smuggled, should satisfy the "male drinking population" which he enumerated as 36,000 men and youths.<sup>113</sup> Drink, the writer claimed, had "cost more money than bad voyages and want of employment." The Receiver General would be "no friend of the country [to] cheapen what is a curse to the country and *Tax Food and Flour* which is a blessing ... we cannot do without."<sup>114</sup>

Teetotallers were fewer in number but more politically active in the campaign for total abstinence than were moderate advocates of temperance. The Total Abstinence (TA) Association, organized by a few Protestant clergy, reported a membership of 43 in St. John's at the end of 1866. They started a juvenile temperance society for boys aged 10 to 15 to be "trained in the habits of sobriety."<sup>115</sup> The TA Association also started a benefit fund and life insurance scheme for youth which

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<sup>112</sup>*Courier*, 17 March 1865.

<sup>113</sup>*Courier*, 17 March 1865.

<sup>114</sup>*Courier*, 17 March 1865.

<sup>115</sup>*Courier*, 19 December 1866.

provided parents with cash if a son became ill or died. Such schemes were relatively new for children, notably, boys, though male adult insurance through temperance organizations had been in place for many years, prominently advertised, and vigorously promoted by newspaper editors.

Economic benefits of a temperate life failed to convince everyone. At the close of the 1860s letters to the editor of the *Courier* complained vehemently of prostitution and brothels connected with unlicensed grogeries in Magotty Cove in the east end of St. John's.<sup>116</sup> These letters prompted similar correspondence from the outlying areas complaining of "not less than 20 unlicensed houses between Topsail and Holyrood, all of which must be known to the Constable."<sup>117</sup> This turn of events showed how intimately the press was part of the social fabric. A once loose, undisciplined use of alcohol described as a threat to society had been tamed through publicity campaigns, but had also created underground activity in the liquor trade requiring stringent laws.

## 4.11

## Punishment versus Persuasion

In 1875, Judge D.W. Prowse, a long time temperance advocate,<sup>118</sup> lamented that

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<sup>116</sup>*Courier*, 14 November 1868.

<sup>117</sup>*Courier*, 25 November 1868.

<sup>118</sup>Prowse told the Temperance Reform Club, of which he was a member, that all of the crime in Newfoundland was due to intemperance "sapping the foundation of the social structure." See *Evening Telegram*, 28 April 1879.

laws of Newfoundland regarding public drunkenness were not strict enough compared to those in England and the Dominion of Canada. His report to the Court of General Quarter Session for Central District suggested

Drunkenness is a great evil, an evil whose baneful effects cannot be exaggerated, and one means of checking it is to make it a public offence punishable by law. The public punishment of drunkenness makes it more disgraceful and discreditable, and therefore tends to repress it.<sup>119</sup>

He also recognized that drunkenness was not always criminal, and recommended reformatories for abandoned women and juvenile delinquents, saying they were "more effective and economical than mere punishment."<sup>120</sup> The editor of the *Courier* was in favour of stricter legislation and urged the Temperance League, a total abstinence group, to press for the adoption of the Permissive Bill which would prohibit the sale of spirits in grocery stores and mercantile establishments.<sup>121</sup> A magisterial order soon followed "forbidding licensed liquor dealers to sell intoxicating liquors until after the departure of the sealing fleets,"<sup>122</sup> an inference that the 9000 seamen in port at St. John's that spring were a large part of the problem. However, Prowse later

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<sup>119</sup>*Courier*, 9 January 1875.

<sup>120</sup>*Courier*, 9 January 1875. Unless the choice of the word is deliberately ambiguous, it is uncertain why 'abandoned' women were in need of reform, though they may have needed shelter. Women were occasionally included in reports of public drunkenness, but Prowse's report did not address the subject directly.

<sup>121</sup>*Courier*, 20 February 1875.

<sup>122</sup>*Public Ledger*, 11 March 1875; *Courier*, 13 March 1875.



acknowledged that he saw few of them before the court.

Buoyed by a more stringent licence act in the summer of 1875, temperance-minded newspaper editors called for even more tea rooms and coffee houses, saying it was the "imperative duty" of temperance leaders to provide the "cup that cheers, but does not inebriate" in order to "drive intemperance from the land."<sup>123</sup> The editor of the *Courier* was convinced that a cooperative effort from the heads of the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church would ensure adoption of a prohibitory law, citing similar moves against liquor traffic in England.<sup>124</sup> Only weeks later a contradictory report stated that Christians in England remained aloof from the temperance movement, and were spending millions on alcohol.<sup>125</sup> "Rumocracy," declared the *Courier*, ruled in England where the grog-sellers had influenced the vote that defeated Gladstone and his party; that publicans had taken over as "dictators of public opinion."<sup>126</sup> Despite petitions circulating in St. John's, and the outcropping of new and varied prohibitory advocacy groups, the editor of the *Courier* despaired that the temperance movement was also losing influence in St. John's, if not in the rural

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<sup>123</sup>*Courier*, 12 June 1875.

<sup>124</sup>*Courier*, 12 June 1875.

<sup>125</sup>*Courier*, 28 August 1875.

<sup>126</sup>*Courier*, 25 September 1875.

areas.<sup>127</sup> In 1877, the temperance cry was fading in the *Courier*, due undoubtedly to the death of its proprietor Joseph Woods. His newspaper passed from the scene in 1878, but other newspaper crusaders continued to the end of the century.

"Dare To Say No"<sup>128</sup>

When the *Evening Telegram* was published in St. John's in spring of 1879, it made no pretence at becoming a partisan political journal. It was devoted to advertisers, social notes, and temperance. For a long time its front page was filled with nothing but advertisements. But in the first issue, the centre of the front page was reserved for a lengthy four-stanza verse on the temptation of alcohol:

... when you're tempted to drink, pause for a moment  
 my brave boy, and think - think of the wreck upon life's  
 ocean tossed ...  
 [...]  
 Think of the mother who ...  
 Think of her love, and at once say No!<sup>129</sup>

There can be little doubt that the personal influence of James Murray, who was certainly involved as editor of the *Temperance Journal* between 1875 and 1878, and almost certainly involved with the *Telegram* at its inception, was in evidence here. It was around this time in Massachusetts that a law was passed holding liquor vendors

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<sup>127</sup>*Courier*, 11 September 1875; *Courier*, 25 September 1875.

<sup>128</sup>From a poem, *Evening Telegram*, 3 April 1879.

<sup>129</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 3 April 1879.

responsible for death or injury caused by their intoxicated customers. An editorial in the *Telegram* suggested that particular law should be duplicated in Newfoundland.<sup>130</sup> In response, an unnamed "celebrated whiskey vendor" threatened legal action against the *Telegram* for its depiction of liquor vendors as "licensed criminals." The threat was scoffed at by the editor (possibly Murray), who cited several similar failed attempts against the *London Times* between 1872 and 1879. The *Telegram's* own defence was to increase the information that poured in from all sources, including the medical journal *Lancet*, on the detrimental effects of alcohol.

The confidence displayed by the editor of the *Telegram* may have been bolstered by the Church of England's public embrace of the temperance movement in 1879. Until that year, the Church of England had been reticent about officially adopting the temperance cause. Although church members had supported various temperance organizations for many years, it was not until 1879 that an official Church of England Temperance Society was sanctioned by the new Bishop of Newfoundland, and then only after four years of deliberation by the Synod. The newspapers were filled with the reports. The *Telegram* carried the whole of the meetings of the three Anglican congregations in St. John's held in the Central School. The remarks of the Bishop, and prominent men called upon by the Bishop to attend, were reported

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<sup>130</sup> *Evening Telegram*, 11 August 1879.

verbatim over several days.<sup>131</sup>

The distinguishing feature of the Church of England Temperance Society was that it included both moderate and total abstinence. It differed from the Wesleyan branches whose ministers were required to be total abstainers, and who advocated the same among members; and from the Roman Catholic branches which promoted an enforced pledge. This event amounted to a revival of the movement, particularly in St. John's, where in the late 1870s, it was claimed public drunkenness had increased. For the first time, Anglican Bishop Llewellyn Jones (Bishop of Newfoundland 1870-1917) appeared at a public meeting in the Temperance Hall,<sup>132</sup> and for the first time the topics of 'women drunkards' and women's role generally in temperance were discussed to such an extent in the press. Bishop Jones was reported saying that he knew of women whose husbands and friends kept their drinking habits secret, and that he wished for women to join the society.<sup>133</sup> He further suggested that women bore much of the responsibility for the weakness of intemperate men; that if young women placed a "social ban" on young men of intemperate habits, drinking would soon "become

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<sup>131</sup>*Telegram*, 18 December 1879; 20 December 1879; 23 December 1879. It appears that the meetings in the Central School were public in the sense that members of the press were there to report the event, but participants were confined to the congregations of St. Mary's, St. Thomas's, and Cathedral parishes of St. John's.

<sup>132</sup>*Telegram*, 30 December 1879. The meeting in the Temperance Hall was open to the general public.

<sup>133</sup>*Telegram*, 18 December 1879.

unfashionable."<sup>134</sup> More direct responsibility was laid on married women in other quarters. For example, a letter to the editor of the *Twillingate Sun*, signed "One who didn't like it," complained that temperance meetings frightened women.<sup>135</sup> A letter in response, signed "One of the speakers," maintained that if a wife did not "exert her influence" she was partly responsible for her drunkard husband "losing his soul."<sup>136</sup>

In turn, Judge Prowse praised the press of Newfoundland for advancing temperance; despite "several rum editors," whom he did not identify, he said, "no newspaper [was] distinctly recognized as an organ of the liquor trade."<sup>137</sup> He paid tribute to Francis Winton, editor of the *Chronicle*, and MHA, who had marshalled the Local Option Bill (Licensed Act) through the legislature in 1875. Like the Bishop, Prowse believed there was a "great deal of quiet inebriety" among the middle class that never came to police notice, and consequently did not appear in the court reports of the newspapers.<sup>138</sup> Of all the cases that came before the magistrates, Prowse said,

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<sup>134</sup>*Telegram*, 30 December 1879.

<sup>135</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 16 September 1880.

<sup>136</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 23 September 1880.

<sup>137</sup>*Telegram*, 31 December 1879. Prowse was addressing the same public meeting (27 December 1879) at which the Lord Bishop of Newfoundland spoke. Prowse did not name the "rum editors" nor is it easy to discern who they might have been. Except in degree, temperance was a virtue with which few argued.

<sup>138</sup>*Telegram*, 31 December 1879. Prowse noted the absence of an aristocracy in the colony, saying "[t]he best of us are only middle class people, 'and so are our sisters, cousins and aunts.' "

the vast majority were in St. John's, of whom "foreign sailors" were a small percentage of the total number. Prowse also noted that virtually no cases of drunkenness were reported by the magistrates in the outports, particularly in the Northern District. This was a significant distinction, given the great strength of Methodism and the temperance movement in the Twillingate area. There, Jabez P. Thompson, a Methodist and temperance advocate, launched the area's first newspaper dedicated first to religion, then to liberty and the law.<sup>139</sup> The new moral guardians of the press in St. John's and Conception Bay were swift to offer encouragement. Commendations to Thompson were published in the *Evening Telegram*, *Royal Gazette*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Terra Nova Advocate*, *Harbour Grace Standard*, *Carbonear Herald*, and *Total Abstinence Record*.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>The *Twillingate Sun* was first published 24 June 1880. J.P. Thompson was the brother-in-law of A.A. Parsons, editor of the *Evening Telegram*, also a Methodist and temperance organizer. Parsons married Maria Raven Thompson in 1871. Thompson's widowed first-cousin, Drusilla Ingham Jillard was married to Rev. T.W. Atkinson, Methodist Minister and temperance leader. See G. J. Ainley Thompson, *The Thompson Family History* (London, Ontario, 1937), 18.

<sup>140</sup>The congratulatory notes from the editorial fraternity, as well as from temperance colleagues, were re-printed in the *Twillingate Sun*, 5 August 1880. An affidavit for the *Total Abstinence Record*, dated 27 March 1880, was signed by James P. Rahl as the printer and proprietor, along with nine various tradesmen and one teacher. See PRL, GN32/3. The newspaper is not extant.

When A.A. Parsons was officially installed as editor in 1882, the *Telegram* took on a more political complexion, and became entirely partisan through the years. But Parsons, like the publisher, William J. Herder, were both Methodists and temperance advocates. Every advantage to the temperance cause was given by what became the most enduring political daily newspaper. Although opposing views on prohibition were printed, they did not escape editorial condemnation. "F.J" wrote from Heart's Content to say that banning liquor from that community was asking the people to "give up their right to independent thought." The editor of the *Telegram* headlined the letter: "Some 'Peculiar Views' on the Liquor Question," and followed the letter with a note: "It is hardly necessary to remark that we do not endorse the views of our correspondent touching on the liquor question. That goes without saying." Arguments in favour of prohibition were presented daily, tracing its success, for example, in parts of Australia and the United States.<sup>141</sup> Dramatic multi-decked headlines declared the "Anti-Liquor War" and "Preparations for a Big and Decisive Battle."<sup>142</sup> Parsons also served on the committee which conducted a poll in St. John's on the question of prohibition.<sup>143</sup> But attempts at total prohibition in Newfoundland in the 1880s failed. Local Option which had come about to some extent in the revival of

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<sup>141</sup>*Telegram*, 20 November 1879.

<sup>142</sup>*Telegram*, 31 October 1884.

<sup>143</sup>*Telegram*, 31 October 1884.

the mid-1870s was the best that was achieved, despite constant support in the press -- particularly by Methodist editors.

#### 4.13

#### Conclusion

A history of the temperance movement in Newfoundland, still to be written, is imbedded largely in the nineteenth-century newspapers. For more than half a century the newspaper press in Newfoundland defined, commented on, and was party to temperance organization. The newspaper crusade of the 1830s to 1860s helped build the movement and widen its appeal. The revival in the late 1870s was supported in large measure by a new crop of vigilant newspaper editors to the end of the century. Although it failed to effect a mass cultural change in drinking habits the official collaboration of the Church of England had broadened the scope, bringing the three major religious denominations -- Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Methodist/Wesleyan -- together as never before. Unified as they were on the principles of temperance they remained divided on ways to achieve the goal.

Temperance was a many-sided issue that cut across classes and religious denominations, as well as trade and commerce. The gulf between those who claimed to practice total abstinence and those who preferred moderation remained wide on economic and moral grounds -- an ideal issue for continued debate arousing public



opinion -- the essence of newspaper discourse. It was, however, largely an elite debate, and despite their devotion to the cause, in the public mind intemperance was connected to poverty. The lasting impression left by Judge Prowse was that although the habit knew no bounds, the most sweeping reform was needed "in the houses of the poor."<sup>144</sup> Before drunkenness was diminished it had to be first eliminated "amongst the very lowest classes."<sup>145</sup> Thus was a portrait of the society established that intemperance was a main cause of poverty -- a portrait sustained by a middle-class press.

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<sup>144</sup>*Telegram*, 31 December 1879.

<sup>145</sup>*Telegram*, 31 December 1879.

## Chapter Five: The Press and Poverty: Portraits and Policies

## 5.1 Introduction

Unlike intemperance, poverty was specific to the labouring classes, or "lower orders," and was accepted as a permanent characteristic of society, which might be ameliorated, but never abolished. Poverty was endemic throughout the colony as most of the population depended solely on the precarious balance of good and bad fishing seasons. Pauperism was the worst state of destitution that authorities were forced to address. Official relief committees existed prior to the 1820s, but after Governor Thomas Cochrane arrived in 1825, he set up a system based loosely on the unreformed British model.<sup>1</sup> Relief was then administered upon reports to the governor from the chief surgeon in St. John's and from magistrates stationed throughout the colony. Following the 1832 Reform Bill, a system of relief was established for the aged, and disabled; the indigent, able-bodied, and "less eligible." Words such as 'subsistence' and 'deprivation' helped to define the categories of poverty. The resulting English Poor Laws of 1834, however, were not transferred or adopted officially in Newfoundland,

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Godfrey, *Human Rights and Social Policy in Newfoundland 1832-1982: Search for a Just Society* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1985) 9, 10. Sean Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) deals extensively with Cochrane's approach to poverty in Newfoundland.

though the concept was applied to local conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Otherwise, poverty was generally the purview of middle-class charitable organizations, praised and promoted by the press. Such groups had been established since the 1700s, the first being the Christian missionary schools. The Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor was founded in 1804<sup>3</sup>; the Benevolent Irish Society in 1806;<sup>4</sup> the Dorcas Society in 1824;<sup>5</sup> and St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1852.<sup>6</sup> Accepted as Christian duty, a standard middle-class response of the time, charity functioned in accord with government relief. As poverty did not recede under local administration, the financial "burden" of poor relief was even more politically sensitive some 20 years later when the colony was granted responsible government in

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<sup>2</sup>Godfrey, *Human Rights and Social Policy*, 3. Godfrey noted also that Irish emigrants to Newfoundland brought no poor-law tradition with them. An official poor law was not established in Ireland until 1838.

<sup>3</sup>The Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor was organized by Governor Erasmus Gower in 1804 to instruct children in knitting twine for nets, carding, spinning and knitting wool, and to teach agricultural skills to families.

<sup>4</sup>The Benevolent Irish Society (BIS) was at first non-denominational, and later Roman Catholic. It provided schooling in St. John's for poor children, and necessities for the poor in general. Its membership was male, with the bishop in office acting as its patron.

<sup>5</sup>The Dorcas Society was established by a group of St. John's women whose membership was restricted to 12. Although Protestant in makeup, the society devoted its attention, as did other charities, to all of the poor regardless of denomination. The Dorcas Society was especially favoured by amateur theatre groups whose productions raised money for poor relief. See e.g., *Royal Gazette*, 12 February 1828.

<sup>6</sup>St. Vincent de Paul Society was founded by Bishop Mullock in 1852 and run by lay people of the Roman Catholic Cathedral parish.

1855.

A comprehensive history of poverty in Newfoundland does not exist. Apart from Godfrey's policy overview, and new information from court records in Cadigan's recent work, scattered references from works dealing with other topics are useful. For example, valuable insights are contained in Edward Moulton's study of politics of the 1860s;<sup>7</sup> Frederick Jones's work on Bishop Feild;<sup>8</sup> and Melvin Baker's history of St. John's.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, little work has been done on poverty and the press, though scholars elsewhere have examined the "working-class press" or "labour press."<sup>10</sup> In a Canadian context, Spencer argued that the goal of labour journalism between Confederation and

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<sup>7</sup>Edward Moulton, "The Political History of Newfoundland 1861 - 1869," (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1960).

<sup>8</sup>Frederick Jones, "Bishop Feild, A Study in Politics and Religion in Nineteenth Century Newfoundland," (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>9</sup>Melvin Baker, "The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland 1800-1921," (PhD dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 91-142.

<sup>10</sup>David R. Spencer, "An alternate vision: Main themes in moral education in Canada's English-Language working-class press, 1870-1910," (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1990). Spencer examined the labour press of Central Canada and British Columbia as the beginning of a national working-class press. Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830s* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Hollis focused on Chartism, a reform working-class movement in Great Britain, and the emergence of the penny, or pauper press. Eileen Yeo and E.P. Thompson, *The Unknown Mayhew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). This study examined the London *Morning Chronicle* series, "Labour and the Poor," published from October 1849 to December 1850, later incorporated in Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 4 vols., (London: Griffin, Bohn, 1861-1862; London: Frank Cass, 1967); Anne Humphreys, *Henry Mayhew* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984).

1910 was to convince an emerging working class to reject the liberal-democratic, capitalist vision of the dominant culture. He concluded that despite an environment for dissident journalism, labour newspapers -- "always balanced on the brink of financial ruin" -- failed to flourish.<sup>11</sup> Such a labour press did not begin to develop in Newfoundland until William Coaker founded the *Fishermen's Advocate* in 1910. But the working classes appeared to be championed by a few editors such as J.V. Nugent of the *Vindicator/Indicator* in the 1840s, and Thomas Talbot of the *Record* in the 1860s. However, their personal political ambitions, laden with Irish nationalist sentiment tended to cloud the issue. Although they placed issues of injustice and poverty on the public record, it would be difficult to describe their short-lived newspapers as a "working-class press."

This chapter examines how attitudes toward poverty were articulated in the newspaper press; how the poor were portrayed generally, and by editors, some of whom were also politicians responsible for policies of poor relief. Like their link to intemperance, the poor were often said to be unwilling to work, save, or to make sacrifices. In that context charities might be considered similar to temperance crusaders, but the press did not mobilize in the same way to solve conditions of poverty. Instead, the issue of poverty was met with ambivalence that served primarily to maintain the status quo.

In 1855, under the new government, a committee was struck to investigate and

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<sup>11</sup>Spencer, "An Alternate vision," 2.

measure conditions of poverty with a view to making improvements. This committee, and the report of its findings bear attention because its chairman was Robert J. Parsons, then 18 years a member for St. John's East,<sup>12</sup> and also the proprietor and editor of the *Patriot and Terra Nova Herald*.<sup>13</sup> Serving on the committee as members of the government at the same time, were Ambrose Shea, for St. John's West, and his brother, E.D. Shea, for Ferryland, who were also owners and editors of the *Newfoundlander*.

Newspaper content relative to the issue of poverty included government proclamations, Assembly debate, reports of destitution, editorial commentary, and letters to the editor describing personal accounts of poverty, or letters written on behalf of others unable to write. The language used to discuss the poor is, in itself, instructive about the culture of the time in Newfoundland as elsewhere. Even those newspaper editors who expressed a need to create a more equal distribution of wealth, described the poor as victims or objects of misfortune somehow separate from the rest of society, whose duty it was to help in some way. Concern for the "alarming degree" of poverty, echoed a concern for the "drain on the public purse," also a common editorial phrase. It was rhetoric that changed very little through the century.

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<sup>12</sup>While owner and editor of the *Patriot*, Parsons was MHA for St. John's East from 1837 to 1874, after which he was replaced by his son, Robert, in the 1878 election.

<sup>13</sup>The committee was struck in the spring of 1855 and the testimony gathered to at least the end of June, 1855.

The working poor, who bore hardships in relative silence, occasionally were moved to public protest by way of letters to the editor. Coincident with the first election campaign in 1832, letters to the editor suggested that fishermen's rights might be protected from an oppressive truck system<sup>14</sup> through representation in the House of Assembly. A letter from Harbour Grace in the *Newfoundlander* complained that the value of the supplies received was inflated.<sup>15</sup> Only in Conception Bay, "A Fisherman" said, was

... an advance of full *Thirty per cent* being tacked on every article more than the actual selling price, -- because we were *bound by an agreement* to take goods for our hard-earned wages, of whatever description or quality our employers might have in their stores ... could human nature any longer bear with such glaring wrongs without a struggle to redress them?<sup>16</sup>

He asked for 40 copies of the newspaper containing the letter to distribute among his fellow labourers. Such direct political action was by then well known in Harbour Grace. Earlier in the spring of 1832 thousands of sealers held violent public

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<sup>14</sup>The truck system was the method of paying fishermen in goods and supplies for the fish catch returned to the supplying merchant. For a discussion of this system as it relates especially to Conception Bay, see Cadigan, *Hope and Deception*. See also, *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer, (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 22 November 1832.

<sup>16</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 22 November 1832.

demonstrations demanding cash wages.<sup>17</sup> The Governor had proclaimed the public gathering of fishermen illegal. Most newspaper editors condemned the violence and called for law and order.<sup>18</sup>

The Sheas were merchants as well as newspaper publishers and politicians, and did not see themselves and other merchants as oppressors. Editorials in the *Newfoundlander* consistently rejected the notion that the labouring class in Newfoundland was as oppressed as that of other countries, or as poor as some argued. Merchants and government were thereby portrayed as benevolent providers. The Sheas tended to agree with the position taken in the 1830s by the *London Times*, whose editorials they carried, that uprisings of the working class were "a new variety of political monster."<sup>19</sup> Publishing such a letter may have been the Sheas' way of exposing the "new monster."

It was almost a decade later that J.V. Nugent brought out his *Vindicator*, which claimed to represent the interests of the poor and labouring classes. Though the Sheas and Nugent shared the same religion and similar Irish heritage, their political agendas differed. During the fall and winter of 1842 some scathing pre-election remarks were

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<sup>17</sup>See Linda Little, "Collective Action in Outport Newfoundland: A Case Study from the 1830s," *Labour/Le Travail*, 26, 7-35.

<sup>18</sup>The *Conception Bay Mercury* (Harbour Grace) was the only newspaper published in Conception Bay at the time of the sealers' riot. Unfortunately, no issues for 1832 are extant.

<sup>19</sup>Extract from the *London Times* (no date) in reference to the upsurge of trade unions at the end of 1831, in the *Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1832.



exchanged between the Sheas in the *Newfoundlander* and Nugent in both the *Vindicator* and *Indicator*.<sup>20</sup> Apart from the underlying religious and nativist feelings, the key issue was poverty, since the Sheas found it intolerable that Nugent had suggested to fishermen that merchants were their oppressors. Their attitude was undoubtedly reinforced by the fact that another brother, Dr. Joseph Shea, was the chief surgeon responsible for relief distribution -- who may not have responded swiftly, judging from the official correspondence.<sup>21</sup> Thus the Sheas played down the plight of the poor and saw the discussion around poverty as incendiary journalism that "[kept] alive factious dissensions" in the community. Under the heading, "A FEW WORDS TO THE LABOURING CLASSES"<sup>22</sup> Shea warned that Nugent's goal was merely to gain personal political power, pitting employees against employers by

...representing to the former class that the Merchants of the country are their enemies and their oppressors, who grind them down at their will and pleasure, and deal by them as though they were the veriest slaves on the face of the earth... that more unprincipled task masters were not to be found in any habitable part of the globe.<sup>23</sup>

He considered the *Indicator's* image of Newfoundland damaging, as it would be

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<sup>20</sup>At least 70 issues of the *Indicator* are not extant. These exchanges are assessed from the available issues of the *Newfoundlander*.

<sup>21</sup>Letters 1825-1860, Newfoundland Magistrates' Office, Harbour Grace, Collection 003. CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>22</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842; *Newfoundlander*, 8 December 1842.

<sup>23</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 24 November 1842.

presented to "those at a distance... unacquainted with the Country."<sup>24</sup> In fact, Shea argued, workers in Newfoundland were relatively well off, given that the mercantile world as a whole was in depression. English and Irish newspapers had accounts of thousands of families subsisting on wages of four shillings a week, and thousands more destitute and unable to find employment. Contrasting the situation in Newfoundland, he suggested that

...for an aggregate amount of wages or earnings the means they obtain, and the abundance of the necessities of life within their reach, and which they enjoy are not to be equalled by any similar population of which we have any knowledge... they will thank God that they are in a Country where the means of life are within the reach of every poor man who will honestly work for his subsistence.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, Shea considered a state of subsistence acceptable for workers while merchants were suffering substantial losses as they took all the financial risk in providing supplies to men on credit. In 1841, the *Newfoundlander* was among the first to warn that poor market prices for Newfoundland fish would likely mean that merchants might not be able to supply fishermen for the following season. Merchants could not have supplied on credit in such circumstances without loss of profit. As Shea saw it, the "monied class of the community" held the power; planters, as well as fishermen, were "obliged to seek credit." That being so, merchants had the right to determine the return on the capital they advanced -- "No man of Capital will employ

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<sup>24</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842, cit., *Indicator*, 26 November 1842.

<sup>25</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 1 December 1842.

his property on any other terms -- and to expect it would be both unreasonable and unjust."<sup>26</sup> If Nugent wished to represent fishermen in any other light, Shea suggested it would be "false representation."<sup>27</sup>

Nugent's attempt to introduce an opposition press with his rhetoric of resistance on behalf of working people, was ably challenged by the Sheas, and also by William Charles St. John, owner and editor of the *Weekly Herald* in Conception Bay.<sup>28</sup> St. John had accepted an advertisement from Nugent calling for a public meeting of fishermen of the area, which, according to St. John, was ignored:

It is scarcely necessary for us to state that the Fishermen of Conception Bay paid no attention to the Notice referred to in our last number. There has been no meeting of that body in Mosquito Valley for the political purposes set forth in the Placard, nor for any other purpose whatever. --  
*Try it again master Indicator.*<sup>29</sup>

St. John was a Protestant native of Harbour Grace with no political aspirations of his own. He was not averse to publishing letters of grievance about poverty, but he, like

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<sup>26</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 8 December 1842.

<sup>27</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 8 December 1842.

<sup>28</sup>Governor Sir John Harvey also argued later that Newfoundland was not so badly off. Almost everyone in the outports had a "piece of land," cultivated by the family for support during the winter, and the most destitute were "provisioned" by government. See CO 194/125, Harvey to Stanley, 12 March 1846. Harvey made no mention of the many charitable organizations that worked voluntarily to feed and clothe the poor.

<sup>29</sup>Extract from the *Weekly Herald*, possibly Wednesday, 7 December 1842, or the previous week's issue, 30 November 1842, carried in the *Newfoundlander*, Thursday, 8 December 1842. The first three years of the *Weekly Herald* -- 1842, 1843, and 1844 -- are not extant.

Shea, and the majority of newspaper editors, loathed public disturbances, including workers' demonstrations, and preached middle-class values of self-help, frugality, and above all, public order.

Nugent would have had a difficult time going against such a tide, but his inability to maintain a "radical" newspaper had less to do with championing the poor than with his often petty, self-serving strictures directed toward those who disagreed with him, and those he slandered, which bankrupted him in libel suits.<sup>30</sup> Thus both the *Vindicator* and the *Indicator* failed to connect with the "lower orders" to develop a working-class press, and might be remembered more for their vitriol and invective than for their social contribution.

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<sup>30</sup>Nugent was "plunged into the Debtor's cell for £150" in December, 1842 prior to being nominated as representative for St. John's in an ensuing election. See *Patriot*, 14 December 1842. The charge of libel had been laid against him more than six months previously by Charles Simms, stipendiary magistrate, who, along with another magistrate, Peter W. Carter, were accused by Nugent of misappropriating monies due to the Court. See *Newfoundlander*, 26 May 1842. His arrest, so long after the charge was laid, was said to have been a vindictive move on the part of political opponents to keep Nugent out of the election race. His friends at the *Patriot*, and other supporters, paid for his release, and Nugent was subsequently elected. See *Patriot*, 21 December 1842. Nugent was in court earlier that month having instigated a libel suit against J.W. McCoubrey, editor of the St. John's *Times*, asking damages of £1000. McCoubrey had stated that Nugent was forced to leave Ireland to avoid prosecution for political violence, adding that Nugent was the "chief schemer" in the House of Assembly. McCoubrey could not provide concrete evidence against Nugent of violence in Ireland, and was ordered to pay Nugent £50. See *Patriot*, 14 December 1842. Nugent may have also been implicated in the libel suit laid against the *Patriot* editor, R. J. Parsons, and William Beck, then proprietor, by Henry Winton of the *Public Ledger* claiming damages of £500. Parsons was not proved author of the libel, but Beck was ordered to pay Winton £50. Nugent was said to be the sole cause of resentment against the *Patriot*. On this last point see Elizabeth Wells, "Nugent, John Valentine." *DCB*, X, 552-553.

The Harbour Grace *Weekly Herald* attracted an inordinate number of letters compared with many newspapers, and for that reason provides some graphic descriptions of how life was lived outside St. John's. Certainly the north shore of Conception Bay suffered great hardship, and even if the poor could not write letters, others did on their behalf. However, wealth coexisted with destitution. For example, in January, 1848 the *Weekly Herald* reported the wedding of Bareneed residents, Thomas Batten and Mary Richards, at which 200 guests sat down to dinner -- "a most sumptuous repast consisting of choice collection of viands, and other numerous delicacies." A second such meal was offered at the home of the groom's father the following day. On each occasion, the report said, "the poor of the neighbourhood came in for a hearty 'blowout'."<sup>31</sup> On the same page of the newspaper, a letter signed "Humanitas" told of a woman destitute in Spaniard's Bay, dead of starvation -- leaving "eight or nine children." Her husband was said to be "a cripple, and endeavoured to provide a little corn meal from his work last fall upon the roads." The letter continued,

... the Governor's motive in refusing to send food in sufficient quantities is no doubt a good one; he wishes to teach a severe lesson to the people in order that a greater degree of industry and parsimony may be encouraged among us; but I doubt if he is not carrying the experiment a little too far... I am a great admirer of His Excellency's firmness, but care must be taken that even this virtue be not pushed to extreme.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 19 January 1848. The Batten-Richards wedding had taken place 12 January 1848.

<sup>32</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 19 January 1848.

St. John no doubt also agreed with the governor's "severe lesson," as witnessed by his frequent editorial commentary on self-help and temperance. Poverty was circumstantial, therefore more easily individualized, and more readily accepted as normal. He made no comment on the dramatic contrast in the two letters appearing on the same day on the same page, relative to social conditions of the day. Nor was there any reaction from subscribers. These depictions in the press served to reinforce such attitudes.

At the same time, St. John expressed annoyance at discrepancies in relief between the outports and St. John's. Forced on one occasion to deal personally with a number of destitute people who marched into his office from Spaniards' Bay, he described the situation in an editorial under the bold heading:

#### SPANIARDS' BAY DESTITUTION!!

... The poor fellows assured us that, with the exception of a few muscles [sic] neither they nor their families had partaken of food for the last 48 hours. Now, is this right? The paupers in St. John's can manage (see official accounts) to have 2 barrels of flour at one time in their houses, while the poor of the out-ports must subsist upon horse-flesh ...<sup>33</sup>

Face to face with hungry beggars, who said they were told that the press was the only way a "statement of their sufferings would be likely to reach the ear of Government,"<sup>34</sup> St. John lashed out this time at the governor, whose salary he quoted at £3,000 a year.

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<sup>33</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 11 April 1849.

<sup>34</sup>It is possible the poor people were sent to the newspaper by the magistrate, who might have been unable to convince authorities of their needs.

He ridiculed the members of the legislature, whom, he said, "never stir from St. John's," and who knew as much about the conditions in the colony as the "senators of Loo Choo." Then, as though it might be construed that he was fabricating the story, the editor provided a list of the more destitute families in Spaniards' Bay, "as obtained from the mouths of the persons who have just left our office."<sup>35</sup>

In this particular case, the press may have functioned as a conduit between the remote poor and the halls of power. But St. John was not always so benevolent, and may have been overwhelmed by a throng of hungry men marching into his print shop. His argument on their behalf was only that subsistence in the outports should be at least equal to that in St. John's -- a position hardly different from that of the editor of the *Newfoundlander* or of the majority of his fellow journalists in St. John's.

Disasters of fire and famine through the 1840s both in the colony and in Ireland precluded any efforts to alleviate the conditions of the poor in Newfoundland. In 1846, fire destroyed most of the wooden buildings in St. John's leaving thousands homeless. Sheds erected as temporary shelters remained for 15 years. In 1847, potato blight occurred throughout the island, forcing inhabitants to migrate to St. John's looking for relief, adding to the overwhelming problems already existing there.<sup>36</sup>

The newspapers of St. John's and Conception Bay chronicled the dramatic

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<sup>35</sup>*Weekly Herald*, 11 April 1849.

<sup>36</sup>See Baker, "Government of St. John's, Newfoundland," and see Cadigan, *Hope and Deception* for analysis of crop failure on the north-east coast at this time. Cadigan argues that road building would not have solved the innate problem of poor soil.

events of the period, striving for that delicate balance between asserting self-sufficiency in time of crisis, and soliciting aid from neighbouring colonies as well as major cities such as Montreal, Boston, and London. Some newspaper editors and letter writers tried to diminish the actuality of deprivation to ensure that Newfoundland's image of trade and commerce remained intact abroad, despite catastrophic circumstances at home. It was a role played by the press everywhere in similar situations.<sup>37</sup>

#### 5.4 Politician-Proprietors and Public Policy

After more than 20 years of representative government the social structure of the colony had changed little. Some roads had been built, steam communication had improved slightly, and while subsistence farming occurred, food supply and successful fisheries were unpredictable. In that time, between 1832 and 1859, a total of seven newspaper proprietors or editors had been elected to the House of Assembly. Their newspapers recorded the conditions of the poor, while they played the dual role of policy makers seeking solutions to poverty.<sup>38</sup>

By 1855 relief spending had become such a permanent feature of government

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<sup>37</sup>See Joe Cherwinski, "The Rise and Incomplete Fall of a Contemporary Legend: Frozen Englishmen in the Canadian Prairies During the Winter of 1906-07," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études ethniques au Canada*, XXX1, No. 3, 1999, 19-43. Although the main focus of this essay is ethnicity, it discusses representational accuracy and sensationalism in the newspaper press.

<sup>38</sup>Between 1832 and 1897 a total of 16 prominent newsmen had been elected to the House of Assembly. See Appendix no. 2, 324-327.



that some members of the legislature suggested that funds should be distributed in proportion to population in each district, "regardless of the poverty of the people."<sup>39</sup> The select committee of the Assembly to study the problem was chaired by Robert J. Parsons, proprietor/editor of the *Patriot*. The first submission was received from John Kent, fellow Liberal representative of St. John's East.<sup>40</sup> Kent claimed that work outside the fishery was necessary to avoid relief spending from the public purse.<sup>41</sup> He thought that the source of the problem was the old maritime law of current supply which regulated the exchange between merchant and planter, and master and servant, so that [in the absence of cash wages] the product of a voyage ensured the necessary winter supplies for fishermen and their families.<sup>42</sup> This kept the population in a "state of minority tutelage," a kind of false security that precluded any thought of employment other than the fishery. Kent's solution was for government to create jobs, enact laws of limited liability, and set up lending authorities in the outports to service those in need of money to carry on in the fishery.<sup>43</sup> Limited liability would ensure a large circulation

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<sup>39</sup>Moulton, "Political History of Newfoundland," 17.

<sup>40</sup>A redistribution of seats upon introduction of Responsible Government in 1855 increased membership in the House of Assembly to 30 seats. St. John's was divided into two districts, St. John's East and St. John's West, each with three members.

<sup>41</sup>*Journal of the House of Assembly*, 1855, 121; *JHA* Appendix, 256-290.

<sup>42</sup>For a discussion of the old law of current supply, see Cadigan, *Hope and Deception*, 84-85; 143-144; 153-155. Cadigan focuses more on the actions of governors appointed to the colony than on members of the local legislature.

<sup>43</sup>*JHA*, 1855, Appendix, 259-261.

of notes, guarding "unwary fishermen" against loss should the new bank fail. While these recommendations appear to be sound, if not visionary, they stemmed from fear of pauperism and middle-class values that subscribed to the belief that poverty was extended by "unearned" financial assistance.

To support his position, Kent raised the old cause-and-effect argument about poverty and intemperance, relying on the press for illustration. Reading aloud from the high-brow Edinburgh *Quarterly Review*, Kent told the legislative committee that poor relief from a "Destitution Fund" distributed in the Highlands town of Skye in 1850, had been spent on whiskey. People would find ways of making a living, Kent concluded, "when there is no alternative except starvation; but if they can rely upon easy assistance they will not draw painfully upon themselves."<sup>44</sup> Here is evidence of the influence of newspapers from abroad on the local elite who drew upon the experiences described in the British Isles with which they related on a personal level. Here as well is suggested the attitude of certain journalists who maintained the same principles as the ruling elite, and adopted by journalists in Newfoundland, particularly those who pursued political careers such as R.J. Parsons.

Based on Kent's submission, Parsons and his committee drew up a questionnaire, and distributed it to a select number of "prominent persons" in the outports, "eliciting as much information as possible from the extern portion of the Colony." The questions pertained to the level of poverty that existed in a given

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<sup>44</sup>JHA, 1855, 261.

district; a description of people receiving relief; the extent of incapacity along with their names, the cause of poverty in their areas, opportunity for employment, the feasibility of farming, and the average seasonal catch of fish per man.

The responses to the questions filled 30 pages; some testimonies distinguished between casual, or, 'able-bodied poor,' and permanent poor, or 'paupers.' The able-bodied poor were described as those unable to find work, or too poor to clothe themselves to "go in the woods." Widows, their children, the aged and infirm were described as paupers.<sup>45</sup> A few recommendations for improving the situation were offered, the best perhaps being that road work should start early in the fall and relief payments be made daily, in cash. Labrador, although not represented in the House of Assembly, was included in the survey with paltry results. Statistics provided by the report were uneven, and inconclusive. Salaries paid to officials administering poor relief, including medical doctors who attended the infirm, came out of the poor relief fund. These salaries were conspicuous by their generosity compared to the seeming pittance paid to the poor.<sup>46</sup> Discrepancies in the statistical information preclude purposeful comparison between official salaries and relief to recipients.

The approach to the "problem" was to set up a bureaucracy of management,

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<sup>45</sup>*JHA*, 1855, 256-290

<sup>46</sup>For example, commissioners of poor relief received £250; a district surgeon, £200 per annum; the district of Brigus, from Holyrood to Bay Roberts inclusive, estimated population of 14,000, received £800 in 1854. See *JHA*, 1855, Appendix, 282. Poor relief was further manipulated by religious/political favours. See Jones, "Bishop Feild," 243.

whose paid officials benefitted more than did those they served. P.W. Carter, head of the Board of Commissioners for the Poor, believed no remedy was possible; that all depended on the fishery, because the expense of cultivating farms was too great. He estimated a fisherman with a family of seven, the "official average," needed approximately £40 a year to maintain them; otherwise they would "always stand in need of relief."<sup>47</sup> The investigation by Parsons and his legislative committee did not result in a clear picture of poverty, nor did they arrive at solutions.

The Report of the Select Committee on Pauperism was published in several of the St. John's newspapers, including the *Patriot* and the *Newfoundlander*, both on the same day, 20 August 1855. It was common practice for editors to draw readers' attention to major reports on almost any issue or event, encouraging them to read them. In this instance, the report on poverty received no editorial comment, that day or in the days following. Instead, editorials in the *Patriot* and the *Newfoundlander* focused on the historic visit to St. John's by Cyrus Field, the telegraph financier on board the steamer, *James Adger*, accompanied by Peter Cooper, president of the New York, Newfoundland, and London Telegraph Company; Professor Samuel F.B. Morse, his Lady and son; Rev. D. D. Field and the Misses Field, along with various other dignitaries. A party had been arranged and the "saloon of the *James Adger* thrown open" to receive Premier P.F. Little, Kent, Reverends Mullock and Bridge, and members of the Executive Council and House of Assembly.

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<sup>47</sup> JHA, 1855, Appendix, 263.

Poverty received little more attention in the press until spring of the following year when an editorial in the *Patriot* announced that the poor commissioners had been withdrawn and replaced by a committee composed of members of the Executive Council and only one paid commissioner. The *Patriot* editor assured readers that

... really worthy destitute have been supplied with weekly sums in cash according to their wants, whilst the able-bodied have been afforded work to as great an extent as the Government could afford at regular wages per day.<sup>48</sup>

It was, he said, better than the old way and saved money in public expenditure, though he admitted it did not "strike at the root of the evil." What was needed, Parsons allowed, was the removal of "the *cause* of pauperism by creating employment and enforcing habits of industry." Some of the suggestions offered in the *Patriot* editorial included occupying men and boys at "reducing old junk [rope?] into oakum;" out of which women could make mattresses. A factory was suggested for this, where women could also spin wool and knit cuffs and stockings. The editor also suggested resettling families on 10-acre lots between Flat Rock and Pouch Cove -- creating a "township," and providing each man with £5 and two barrels of seed potatoes. With fishing close by, and a superintendent in charge, families could "build tilts, fence ground [and] ... with common industry ... procure all the necessities of life from their land." The *Patriot* editor concluded that his ideas could reduce the large number "living upon funds of the colony for which they give no earthly useful return." They would be "an

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<sup>48</sup>*Patriot*, 17 March 1856.

example to others, and pauperism would vanish from the colony.<sup>49</sup>

A year later, in 1857, there were still no lending or savings institutions in the outports. One of the two banks in St. John's at that time, the British North America Bank, had closed "for lack of business," according to the *Telegraph and Political Review*.<sup>50</sup> Kent wanted a new bank to replace the BNA bank, so as not to be left to the mercy of bank directors who changed from year to year.<sup>51</sup> J.T. Burton, editor of the *Telegraph*, agreed. That spring the *Telegraph* reported the new bank would be named the Commercial Bank of Newfoundland with capital of £50,000, of which £45,000 was already subscribed by leading merchants, and was to open that summer. No plan was suggested for branches in the outports. Nor did Burton or other editors call attention to this discrepancy, or remind Kent of his stated objective for the outports. Furthermore, the *Reporter*, whose editor Thomas Talbot, claimed that newspaper was started the previous year, 1856, to speak for fishermen, mechanics, shopkeepers, and farmers, whom he described as the "industrial middle class," was forced to shut down.<sup>52</sup>

Even a cursory survey of the newspapers of the day reveals much more detail regarding poverty, and the attitudes that so graphically separated rich and poor. In 1861, for example, then premier John Kent, having had his administration dismissed

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<sup>49</sup>*Patriot*, 17 March 1856. No reports were seen that such a plan was carried out.

<sup>50</sup>*Telegraph*, 28 January 1857.

<sup>51</sup>*Telegraph*, 28 January 1857.

<sup>52</sup>*Patriot*, 5 January 1857.

by Governor Sir Alexander Bannerman, pleaded before the Assembly that were he to lose his income (about £700 per annum at the time)<sup>53</sup> he would be hard pressed to maintain his family. In reporting this account, James Seaton of the *Express* ridiculed Kent, who, Seaton suggested, had fared well financially in his 10 years in public office. But Seaton, along with most, if not all newspaper proprietors survived to a large extent on government patronage, and some had done so while they were members of the Assembly.<sup>54</sup> Burton of the *Telegraph* liked to chide others, but he too sought patronage after being elected to the House of Assembly in 1865 as the member for Bonavista.

Quarrelling among newspaper editors over public spending had more to do with their own personal loss or gain than with the needs of the labouring poor, to whom Burton was particularly condescending. For instance, reports from abroad concerning inferior fish from Newfoundland compared with Iceland or Norway generally met with censure from local journalists. Burton's editorials were especially scathing, intolerant, unforgiving, and elitist. On one occasion he noticed that some of the "lower orders" had attended an art exhibit at the Fishermen's Hall:

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<sup>53</sup>Report of House of Assembly proceedings, *Newfoundland Express*, 25 January 1861.

<sup>54</sup>Editorial chiding Seaton about patronage, *Telegraph and Political Review*, 15 February 1860. Seaton, a Presbyterian Scot, represented the district of Burgeo and La Poile in 1859; he was replaced by Hugh W. Hoyles in 1860. See Gertrude Gunn, *The Political History of Newfoundland* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1966), Appendix B, Table VIII, 201. In 1855, Seaton, then secretary of the Central Protestant Committee, considered running for the district of Burin, but withdrew when he found no support. See Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*, 256.

In view of the destitute circumstances of the bulk of our population ... not one in ten had a *right* to be there. Where a family looks forward to Government work, or aid of some kind to enable them to live through the coming winter, it is positively criminal for any members of families to spend money on what is amusement only.<sup>55</sup>

On another occasion Burton had "observed" poor people attending LaRue's War Show and Amateur Theatre:

We can hardly imagine any poor person who has received the benefit of the clothing society acting so foolishly... if a man will not work he can no longer eat at the cost of his more honest neighbour.<sup>56</sup>

The aim of the Self-Assisting Clothing Society was, Burton scolded, "to clothe the naked and teach the value of *little things*."<sup>57</sup> Clearly, people forced to accept used clothing had also to be careful about where they were seen in public, if they were to avoid scrutiny in the local newspapers. Burton's attitude toward the poor went unchallenged in the press which suggests his views were likely shared among his contemporaries and his readers.

In the early 1860s, six St. John's newspaper editors were members of a committee to establish the Athenaeum, a venue for intellectual discussion, lectures, and the like.<sup>58</sup> One lecture, titled "Newfoundland As It Is and As It Might Be," proposed a

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<sup>55</sup>*Telegraph*, 12 November 1862.

<sup>56</sup>*Telegraph*, 30 December 1863.

<sup>57</sup>*Telegraph*, 30 December 1863.

<sup>58</sup>Editors Adam Scott, J. W. M'Coubrey, Francis Winton, Robert Winton, Joseph Woods, and J.T. Burton were members of the committee negotiating with the



manufacturing scheme to employ the indigent in making leather boots and fishing seines. Burton endorsed the idea but suggested that the "deep-rooted prejudice here in favour of imported goods" was not easily overcome, hinting at, but avoiding criticism of local merchants for their lack of investment in diversification.<sup>59</sup> Shortly after, the Newfoundland legislature amended the Land Act to provide unoccupied wilderness land to the poor who "wish[ed] permanent settlement." The newspapers reported that government was prepared to provide a "portion of the money" needed to those who would build a house or start a sawmill. It was, Burton said, a scheme similar to one carried out in Western Canada 60 years earlier under difficulties "equal, if not greater than settlers would find in Newfoundland."<sup>60</sup> It was a scheme "not to be despised [by] men with families...who cannot make a living with their hooks and lines ...".<sup>61</sup> Neither of these ideas was promoted in a unified way by the press, despite its unflagging support for the purpose of the Athenaeum. Newspapers operated on an individualistic basis, serving more as personal platforms for the opinions and political ambitions of their owners and editors.

## 5.5

## Poor Relief versus Democracy

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Commercial Society for space to house the Athenaeum in the early 1860s.

<sup>59</sup>*Telegraph*, 26 March 1862.

<sup>60</sup>*Telegraph*, 28 May 1862.

<sup>61</sup>*Telegraph*, 28 May 1862.

Expenditures on poor relief continued to increase even in periods of seasonal prosperity. In 1865 the fishery was described as moderately successful, yet the government spent more than £30,000 on poor relief. The shift in emphasis was significant; the problem was not poor people but poor relief, a problem that had eluded successive legislative committees since the first attempt in 1855. Political patronage -- the suspected cause -- had to be stopped to curb the toll on the public purse. In order to stop the alleged practice of buying votes with poor relief, Governor Musgrave suggested the right to vote be denied to those on poor relief.<sup>62</sup> A plan was devised to provide agricultural bounties to clear and cultivate certain amounts of land; recipients who did not become self-sufficient within a specified time, and had to apply for relief, lost their right to vote.<sup>63</sup> First published as law in the *Royal Gazette*, 1 May 1866, most of the St. John's newspapers had carried the proposed resolutions verbatim two months earlier offering nothing in the way of critical comment. Ambrose Shea, in moving the resolutions, spoke for two hours in their favour.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the effort, agriculture did not develop; poor relief continued; newspaper editors went on praising local charities, by which time St. Andrew's and St. George's

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<sup>62</sup>CO 194/174, Musgrave to Cardwell, No. 65, 19 July 1865, cited in Moulton, "Political History," 216; 217-219.

<sup>63</sup>Disenfranchisement of paupers was carried out in Britain in accordance with Poor Law.

<sup>64</sup>*Courier*, 14 March 1866.

societies had increased the ranks that helped the "deserving poor."<sup>65</sup> Street begging in St. John's forced Shea and other politicians such as C.F. Bennett and Robert Pinsent, who were also 'commercial men', to consider opening a factory to employ the poor. But they thought it "prudent" to move slowly.<sup>66</sup> Two weeks later the *Courier* reported the opening of a factory in St. John's where about 400 "of all grades of poverty, and of all ages" assembled looking for work. The factory could accommodate fewer than 100 men, women and children who were then put to work making fish nets, knitting, and sewing. Plans were suggested for a second workplace with help from the government.<sup>67</sup> Francis Winton, editor of C.F. Bennett's *Morning Chronicle* was one of the proposers of the scheme which was based on subscriptions and donations. But even charity had its limits. Winton was reported saying that volunteers found soliciting money "distasteful," and suggested donors might consider "sending subscriptions to the Treasurer ... the course prevalent in England and elsewhere."<sup>68</sup> The men of the press, through direct and indirect political involvement, and through the moral rhetoric they used, had contributed significantly to the acceptance of poverty as a fact of life.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>*Courier*, 10 January 1866.

<sup>66</sup>*Courier*, 2 January 1869.

<sup>67</sup>*Courier*, 16 January 1869.

<sup>68</sup>*Courier*, 2 January 1869.

<sup>69</sup>In their study of attitudes toward the poor in the twentieth century, Golding and Middleton argued that such attitudes were rooted in the moral rhetoric of late-Victorian liberalism, "firmly fixed" in vocabulary and tone of popular journalism which

It is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely to what extent poverty existed in Newfoundland through the nineteenth century. Leaving aside reports of destitution resulting from so-called natural disasters, it is clear that the political authorities of the period were not certain of the actual level of poverty that existed, or how to alleviate it. Discrepancies noted in editorials were also prevalent in reports and letters to the editor. The ambiguity inherent in the discourse of poverty in the press suggests that newspapers are not the most reliable source, but they provide a range of views not found elsewhere for the time. More importantly, they reveal how journalists influenced the way poverty was explained and understood.

Poverty and temperance were intimately linked in nineteenth-century thinking. This fundamental idea was communicated and cultivated by a newspaper press which served first the demands of government and commerce. The difference between the two was that temperance cut across class distinctions and evolved into something approaching a mass movement that was seen to have the potential to benefit the rich as well as the poor. The fact that it did not achieve its ultimate goal was probably because of the positive economics of the alcohol trade. Poverty was class-based, separate from the propertied wealthier middle and upper classes, and without the

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contributed in a major way to the construction of the welfare state. See Peter Golding and Sue Middleton, *Images of Welfare* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982). See also Ussif Rashid and Mahamudu Bawumia, "Ecosystem Justice and the Marketplace," *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*, eds. Harold Coward, Rosemary Ommer, and Tony Pitcher (St. John's, NF: ISER, 2000), 142-144.

means to generate such power. No mass movement emerged to eliminate poverty, partly because it was seen as affecting only a portion of the population, and was presented in the press as accounts of individuals, or specific pockets of poverty.

Unlike the issue of temperance where many editors were personally involved in the movement, the issue of poverty provided hardly more than a never-ending political debate which served the purpose of newspaper editors and politicians alike. Publicizing grievances of workers, and the poor, and encouraging charity for the destitute was partly responsible for elevating charity as a "Christian duty" of everyone. In this way, the press both reflected and shaped perceptions of poverty and attitudes toward the poor. By doing so, it contributed less to social reform than to maintaining the status quo.

Poverty and poor relief continued, but the 1860s marked a significant movement toward broader thinking as schemes for employment outside of the fishery were tried and debated. Politicians were especially attentive to excited discussions taking place in neighbouring colonies about the prospects of a Canadian union. The idea of Confederation as a solution to poverty had simmered for years; in the 1860s that debate shifted the focus in the local newspapers for the remainder of the decade.

Chapter Six: The Press and Nineteenth-Century Politics:  
Focus on Confederation

## 6.1 Introduction

Issues of religion, temperance, and poverty preoccupied journalists for decades, and may suggest a rather narrow parochial press at work in Newfoundland, but that was not entirely the case. These concerns were closely linked to the colony's political life in the period from the 1830s to the 1860s, during which the first two decades of representative government were socially and politically turbulent. The achievement in 1855 of responsible government was considered a step forward by many, but the British treaty of 1857, granting additional fishing rights to the French, came as a shock to an increasingly native-born population relying on an unpredictable fishery. While poor relief increased, and other resources lay dormant for want of investment capital, economic solutions seemed impossible. Demands for change by politicians and journalists throughout the period escalated as discussions elsewhere about colonial union in a Canadian federation reached a peak in the mid-1860s.

The purpose of this chapter is not to delineate the confederation debate; that has been done. This chapter focuses on the issue of confederation in the Newfoundland press and examines a number of newspapers selected on the basis of the politics of the editors and their involvement in the debate. It covers the discussion from its origins in the 1830s to its peak in the 1860s to show that the Newfoundland press was engaged from the beginning and that many of the same editors were

involved throughout.

The evidence shows that religion was virtually absent from the newspaper discussion<sup>1</sup> which offered a wide range of opinion, ambivalence, and no unified voice on the issue. Moreover, the role of the press should not be exaggerated, especially in the 1860s, given the uncertainty of circulation and the state of communications, despite the fact that both sides in 1869 found it useful and necessary to start campaign newspapers. At the very least, the newspapers described the issues, but the whole episode shows (again) the highly personal, political, and elitist nature of the Newfoundland press.

Only two historians have considered in detail the role of the Newfoundland press in the Confederation debates.<sup>2</sup> However, Peter B. Waite and H.B. Mayo confined their studies to the most important debates in the 1860s,<sup>3</sup> thus avoiding the complexities of a longer contextual view of newspaper history, which is the aim of

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<sup>1</sup>W. David MacWhirter argued that confederation displaced sectarianism in Newfoundland politics in the 1860s. See W. David MacWhirter, "A Political History of Newfoundland, 1865-1874," (MA Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1963).

<sup>2</sup>MacWhirter took into account exchanges made in various newspapers between particular editors and important players in the confederation debate, such as C.F. Bennett, but he did not offer a specific assessment of the press. See MacWhirter, "A Political History."

<sup>3</sup>Peter B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation 1864-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); H.B. Mayo, "Newfoundland and Confederation in the Eighteen-Sixties," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 29, 2, (June 1948), 125-142.

this study.<sup>4</sup> For the period of the 1860s, this analysis builds on Waite's more comprehensive work which examined the issue of Confederation in newspapers of all of the provinces.

## 6.2

### Initial Interest

Questions surrounding colonial union received considerable attention in the Newfoundland press from about 1837 to 1849. For instance, a lively exchange of information appeared in local newspapers regarding the Upper Canada and Lower Canada rebellions of 1837-38. A continual flow of this news arrived in extracts from the *Nova Scotian*, *Montreal Courier*, *Acadian Recorder*, *New York Gazette*, *Portland Advertiser*, *Boston Atlas*, *New York Albion*, *Liverpool Courier*, and *Bristol Mercury*.<sup>5</sup> The *Colonial Gazette* of London promoted its columns as the best channel for colonists to exert their united influence on the British government, and to keep the English public, which, it claimed, the Colonial office "kept in the dark," informed

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<sup>4</sup>Aled Jones, in his discussion of imposing order on history-writing, noted J.W. Robinson-Scott's claim in 1889 that it was impossible to periodise newspaper history because "the story of journalism is one long course of natural progress." See: Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England*. (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1996) 54, n 20, citing J.W. Robinson-Scott, "The New Journalism," *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press* (1889), 48.

<sup>5</sup>See, e.g., the *Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 12 December 1837; 3 January 1838; 14 March 1838; 25 April 1838; 19 September 1838; *Public Ledger*, 12 January 1838; 24 October 1838; 8 January 1839.



about colonial questions.<sup>6</sup> Lord Durham, Governor in Chief and Lord High Commissioner in British North America, was closely connected with the founders of this reform newspaper<sup>7</sup> which was sold in St. John's,<sup>8</sup> and to which several Newfoundland editors contributed articles of a negative tone about how the colony was run, welcoming reform, though not necessarily colonial union. One example read:

... It has long since become abundantly manifest that the peculiar condition of society in Newfoundland renders it wholly unfit for the reception and proper exercise of free institutions; and it is now earnestly sought by the reflecting part of the population to procure the total abrogation of the present system of local government as the only effectual remedy for the evils which abound.<sup>9</sup>

Any notion that "unruffled tranquility" prevailed in Newfoundland after the granting of a legislature was not to be believed:

... we deem it necessary to disabuse our distant readers of the fallacious idea which assertion seems calculated to impress upon their minds. ...

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<sup>6</sup>*Colonial Gazette* (London), No. 1, For the week ending 1 December 1838; No. 59, 13 November 1839.

<sup>7</sup>The *Colonial Gazette* was founded by reformers Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Charles Buller, and William Molesworth, and printed as a companion sheet to the *Spectator*. The *Colonial Gazette* was likened to a public relations machine for Durham. See Ged Martin, *The Durham Report and British Policy: A Critical Essay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 30.

<sup>8</sup>The *Colonial Gazette* was advertised in St. John's newspapers during the 1840s and was for sale at Thomas McMurdo & Co., Booksellers and Stationers. McMurdo also had apothecaries in St. John's. See, e.g., *Courier*, 1 November 1845. The prospectus for the *Colonial Gazette* appeared in *The Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 8 May 1838.

<sup>9</sup>*Colonial Gazette* (London), 2 March 1839, reprinted from Winton's *Public Ledger*, 8 January 1839.

Here we have a wealthy and intelligent society suffering under the most appalling and grinding tyranny....<sup>10</sup>

Petitions sent to the Colonial Office to have the fledgling legislature dissolved were more than a sign of dissatisfaction. The gauntlet had already been thrown down, according to the editor of the *St. John's Times*, referring to an article on colonial union published in the *Newfoundlander* in 1838.<sup>11</sup> Its author was William Carson, then speaker of the House of Assembly, who had led the movement for representative government. This is significant, as well as the fact that he submitted the article to the *Newfoundlander* and not to the *Patriot*, of which he was a former owner, and whose current owner and editor, R. J. Parsons, had once been a colleague. This may be explained by Parsons' antagonism to union -- he was an anti-confederate in later years -- while the Sheas of the *Newfoundlander* may well have been sympathetic at the time, and later were avid confederates. Carson wanted ties with Britain to remain strong, but thought colonial union was inevitable:

It appears to be the opinion of all politicians that the time will arrive when a separation must take place between the Mother Country and the Colonies. It appears, too, to be generally wished that the separation,

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<sup>10</sup>*Colonial Gazette* (London) 9 March 1839, reprinted from the *St. John's Times* undated. For other reports from Burton's *Star*, and M'Coubrey's *Times*, see *Colonial Gazette*, 1 December 1838; 8 December 1838; 20 April 1839.

<sup>11</sup>The article, titled "Essay on the contemplated New Era in the Destinies of the Six British North American Colonies," appeared in the *Newfoundlander*, 24 May 1838 datelined "Billies," the name of Carson's birthplace in Scotland, adopted for his St. John's residence.

when it does arrive, should be one of mutual consent and good wishes.<sup>12</sup>

Opposing views appeared by circuitous routes as local editors selected choice extracts from elsewhere. Winton of the *Public Ledger* carried much of the *Liverpool Courier's* early criticism of the Durham Report prior to its release.<sup>13</sup> In this way readers learned that the *Fredericton Sentinel* expressed grave doubts about union:

When the details are found...to introduce a general Assembly composed of ten members from each colony, whatever the population -- the scheme is too absurd to warrant the experiment of trial....<sup>14</sup>

An extract from the *Halifax Times* suggested

...on no view of the subject is there the least argument to induce a favourable consideration of it. It is a crude scheme entirely, and whether emanating from Great Britain or from Canada, it is only entitled to passing notice and immediate rejection.<sup>15</sup>

Reports of the Durham proposal were also reprinted in some local newspapers, set in large type, indicative of either local interest, or the importance attached to them by the

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<sup>12</sup>Carson, "Essays on the contemplated New Era." Greene noted that Carson was accused by fellow reformer, Patrick Morris for having "taken leave of his senses" in writing the article. See Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*, 155.

<sup>13</sup>The Durham Report, released in February, 1839, was based on his observations in Lower and Upper Canada and indirect information relative to the other provinces, and recommended legislative union and responsible government.

<sup>14</sup>Extract from the *Fredericton Sentinel* (undated) published in the *Liverpool Courier*, 24 October 1838, published in the *Public Ledger* 25 December 1838.

<sup>15</sup>Extract from the *Halifax Times* (undated) published in the *Liverpool Courier*, 24 October 1838, published in the *Public Ledger* 25 December 1838.

editor.<sup>16</sup>

These were the first stirrings of newspaper debate about the possible union of the British North American colonies. The Durham Report had stimulated interest in the idea, as reflected in the local press, but the issue faded in the 1840s as it had in Britain when the larger issue was responsible government, not union. The *Colonial Gazette* turned its interest to colonization in Australia and New Zealand. In Newfoundland, the elderly William Carson was near the end of his political career, and died in 1843 while the internal politics of Newfoundland were shaky at best. Nativism prevailed in the early 1840s, the mercantile elite, many of whom were involved in the Liverpool trade, felt they were losing control, while the House of Assembly was seemingly paralyzed. Later, the newly amalgamated legislature designed to address sectarian divisiveness experienced a lull which has been described as a period of political apathy.<sup>17</sup> However, newspaper men from outside the colony, such as James Seaton, imbued with ideas of confederation, and keen to promote it, were attracted to Newfoundland.

### 6.3

#### Outsiders Not Welcomed

James Seaton, a Presbyterian Scot, who had plied his trade in other parts of

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<sup>16</sup>See, for example, extracts from *The Quebec Gazette* and the *Montreal Gazette* in the *Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 24 June, 1839; 21 August 1839 respectively.

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth Wells, "The Struggle for Responsible Government In Newfoundland, 1846-1855."

British North America, arrived in Newfoundland in the 1840s from New Brunswick, having been induced by rumour that the place was in need of a newspaper better than the current "mediocre" sheets. He was the ideal replacement for Stephen Daniel, the literary, serene editor of the *Morning Courier* which made its debut in St. John's in 1844.<sup>18</sup> Within the first week of publication, Daniel, sworn to non-partisan ideals, lamented that news outside of politics and sectarian controversy was of little interest. "A public journal," he said, "who is free from party bias, is in anything but an enviable position."<sup>19</sup> Illness caused Daniel to give up as editor, and the *Courier* passed through other hands before it was taken over in 1846 by the Methodist publisher, Joseph Woods, a pro-confederate at the time, who engaged Seaton as editor.

When Seaton arrived, the *Courier* was already two years in a market boasting 10 newspapers, one of which -- W.C. St. John's *Weekly Herald* -- was published outside St. John's. Yet it was only then Shea of the *Newfoundlander* complained that the interests of the Colony were not served well by "too many competing newspapers," leading to an exchange of gibes.<sup>20</sup> Seaton's view of the local press as second-rate made

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<sup>18</sup>The *Morning Courier* was started 21 October 1844 by publisher William Beck, who at the same time was editor of the short lived *Morning Advertiser and Shipping Gazette*, and who had been the publisher for the short lived *Newfoundland Vindicator* (1841-1842).

<sup>19</sup>*Courier*, 28 October 1844. The use of the pronoun 'who' in reference to the newspaper was customary. Editors also used the personal pronoun 'we' in reference to themselves and their newspapers.

<sup>20</sup>See e.g., exchanges between Shea and Seaton, *Courier*, 7 November 1846; *Courier*, 21 November 1846.

him unwelcome in the mainly nativist community of newspaper editors. Undeterred, he thought competition was healthy, suggesting the more than 100 newspapers in British North America would likely double in number as population and commerce grew. He copied many of the Maritime newspapers, sometimes full texts of debates from the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick legislatures, as well as Joseph Howe's famous letters to Lord John Russell concerning colonial issues.<sup>21</sup> A pro-confederate, he might have become a useful ally of the Sheas had he not criticized them for their part in a "corrupt" government that held Newfoundland back.<sup>22</sup> Seaton frequently compared Newfoundland with the other colonies, and called for removal of oppressive tariffs on staple flour that obstructed local bakers and favoured imported biscuits from Hamburg and Copenhagen. He also deplored the fact that while Newfoundland exports entered Nova Scotia free of duty, the reverse was not true; Newfoundland tariffs, he suggested, should correspond with those of neighbouring colonies if only to prevent smuggling. Under colonial union and responsible government, he suggested, such tariffs would be removed; one legislature would decide on tariffs, and the revenue would be used for

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<sup>21</sup>See, e.g., *Courier*, 10 February 1847; 17 April 1847.

<sup>22</sup>*Courier*, 17 March 1847. Seaton may have been the first to challenge the Sheas' "monopoly" on printing the journals and debates of the House of Assembly. He called for a policy of public tendering to dislodge the Sheas' cosy relationship with their "masters" that allowed repeated contract renewals for work he claimed could be done at half the cost. This, from a newcomer must have rankled the Sheas who were also office holders at various levels of government.

the benefit of all.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that Imperial wishes for colonial self-sufficiency were a high priority at the time, and was probably related to colonial union and confederation. However, internal politics, the nativist movement, the clamour for steam navigation and roads, along with poor fish catches, crop failures, the fire of 1846 in St. John's, and the relentless need for poor relief, curtailed discussion of colonial union at this time.

#### The 1850s

It would take some time and association with veteran newspaper men in St. John's for Seaton to be accepted. He left the *Courier* for undisclosed reasons and worked a short time with J.W. M'Coubrey of the *Times*, but was dismissed because they disagreed over political issues, including confederation.<sup>24</sup> In 1851 Seaton, as proprietor, joined forces with J.T. Burton, a pro-confederate, printer and publisher of the *Newfoundland Express*, and former owner of the *Star and Conception Bay Journal*. Although Burton was an avid nativist, and strong supporter of the Church of England, the two had political aspirations and both favoured colonial union. In 1856, while still printing the *Express*, Burton started the *Telegraph*, in which he discussed responsible

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<sup>23</sup>Seaton (and Woods) advocated responsible government, but argued that Newfoundland did not have the "tithe of people to make it work." Seaton said it could only work in Newfoundland if representation were based on property, and not household suffrage, and only with colonial union. See *Courier*, 28 April 1847.

<sup>24</sup>*Times*, 4 July 1849.

government as the forerunner to Confederation. He favoured a federal union similar to the United States, but with a governor-general appointed by the Queen, a legislature representing all the provinces, and a common tariff, as Seaton had suggested almost a decade earlier. Local government should remain as it was, except that the lieutenant-governor would have less jurisdiction and all appointments would be vested in the legislatures. The main consideration, from Burton's point of view, was that the provinces in any federal union should remain "bound to the fatherland by love, such as of a child for parent, [with] common religion, language, and interests."<sup>25</sup>

On this last point, decidedly male, Protestant, and patriotic, if not racist, Burton was in agreement with the editor of the *Anglo-Saxon* in Boston, the expatriate Newfoundlander, William Charles St. John.<sup>26</sup> St. John proposed that Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island be represented in the British House of Commons in the same way as Ireland.<sup>27</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon* was advertised as "widely circulated" in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward

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<sup>25</sup>*Telegraph*, 23 September 1857.

<sup>26</sup>*Telegraph*, 23 September 1857.

<sup>27</sup>*Anglo-Saxon*, 8 August; 15 August; 29 August 1857. St. John, in partnership with John S. Bartlett, former owner of the New York loyalist newspaper *Albion*, were engaged by the British Envoy to the US, F.T. Crampton, to establish a pro-British newspaper in Boston. See James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, "A British Venture Into North American Journalism: The *Anglo-Saxon*, 1855-57," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 1987, 18:2, 197-208. Extracts from the *Albion* were often published in Newfoundland newspapers, and its new owner, J.E. Layman, visited St. John's in 1859 seeking subscriptions. See *Telegraph*, 20 July 1859.



Island, but no evidence was found that it was distributed in Newfoundland. Burton was about the only newsman in Newfoundland to take any notice of it.<sup>28</sup>

The *Telegraph* in St. John's had, almost from the start, favoured the idea of union, so long as it was decided by "our people,"<sup>29</sup> a term used regularly by the politically determined Burton.<sup>30</sup> As important as the issue was, after obtaining responsible government in 1855, the most urgent issues facing the local legislature were a religiously balanced Assembly, the denominational education grant, the reciprocity treaty affecting American access to the fishery, and the international question of French fishing rights on a large part of the Newfoundland coast. The issue of responsible government dominated the newspapers to the mid- 1850s, and the

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<sup>28</sup>F.T. Crampton, Lord Napier, the British representative in Washington, and Lord Clarendon, Foreign Secretary in London used the *Anglo Saxon*, albeit covertly, and only as long as it was useful and convenient. John Bartlett, for example, was supported because of his loyalist journalism of the past; St. John, for the same reason, but also because as a native of Newfoundland, he had strong connections in British North America, and because, according to the Barnes article (n.27), he was "protestant, and greatly respected." St. John held consular appointments relative to trade in Newfoundland, and was an agent for a British insurance company while he was a newspaper publisher in Harbour Grace. The *Anglo Saxon* serves mainly to show that the idea of colonial union percolated among a network of far-flung journalists over a long period of time and discounts the notion of Newfoundland's intellectual isolation.

<sup>29</sup>*Telegraph*, 13 October 1858.

<sup>30</sup>Burton was elected to the House of Assembly in 1865 and again in 1873 under the leadership of Carter, who had always maintained that the question of Confederation would be decided by "the people." See J.K. Hiller, "Confederation Defeated: The Newfoundland Election of 1869," *Newfoundland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. James Hiller and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 84.

French Shore question eclipsed almost everything else throughout 1858 and 1859.<sup>31</sup> These issues, not colonial federation, were more immediate, and far more important issues in Newfoundland.

Most of the 1860s were lean years for a population of about 140,000, mostly concentrated in the Avalon Peninsula. The merchants of St. John's and Conception Bay dominated the local economy which changed with the gradual departure of old outpost firms. World demand for dried cod increased but so did competition along with foreign market tariffs. The result for Newfoundland was an inability to compete, and public debt for increased poor relief.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Confederation dominated the press in British North America. Its acceptance was seen by some locally as a threat to Newfoundland's trading practices, a reduction in revenue, and higher taxes. Others saw it as a possible solution not only to poverty, but to the French Shore question as well.

#### 6.4

#### The 1860s: A Time To Decide

In the 1860s, St. John's remained the dominant newspaper market with a total

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<sup>31</sup>Burton and the *Telegraph*, as did others, supported Governor Bannerman in his call for a commission of inquiry to investigate and resolve the French Shore question. In the spring of 1859 John Kent was appointed to the commission, an appointment coveted by Ambrose Shea.

<sup>32</sup>See J.K. Hiller, "Confederation Defeated: The Newfoundland Election of 1869"; Shannon Ryan, "The Salt Cod Trade in the Nineteenth Century"; and Peter Neary, "The French and American Shore Questions as Factors in Newfoundland History," *Newfoundland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Neary and Hiller (1980).

of 12, and one in Conception Bay, the *Standard and Conception Bay Advertiser* in Harbour Grace, run by William and Robert Squarey.<sup>33</sup> The Sheas, Parsons, M'Coubrey, Woods, Burton, Seaton, and the Wintons, who formed the press corps of the past, remained active and politically involved.

In 1864 Newfoundland had been included formally for the first time in colonial deliberations over the issue of Confederation. At the invitation of the Government of Canada, Newfoundland sent Frederick Carter, then Speaker of the House of Assembly, and Ambrose Shea, Liberal opposition leader, to meet at Quebec with representatives of the other British North American colonies, to ascertain whether terms of union could be settled. Carter told the Quebec delegates that the majority of the people of Newfoundland, if not the whole of them, would be "most anxious and desirous to form this union."<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the press in Newfoundland, in general, took an extremely cautious approach to confederation. Even those editors who were convinced that Newfoundland had made little progress in more than 30 years of local government remained guarded. The Sheas, however, maintained their pro-confederate position. Joseph Woods, at first pro-confederate, later switched sides, and Francis Winton, at first warily in favour, became anti-confederate in the mutually agreed takeover by C.F. Bennett of the *Day Book*, re-named the *Morning Chronicle*.

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<sup>33</sup>The *Standard* in this period was not of great influence. It came under new ownership by Archibald and John Munn in 1888 when its name was changed to the *Harbour Grace Standard* and remained prominent until 1936.

<sup>34</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 3 November 1864.

P.B. Waite claimed that at least two-thirds of the Newfoundland press were in favour of Confederation. He conceded that most residents knew little and understood less about the political discussion, yet suggested the newspapers had misread the mood of the people in their ultimate rejection of the concept. To say the press in Newfoundland favoured Confederation is only partially accurate, and would give it too much credit for decisiveness. Few, other than the *Newfoundlander* and the *Morning Chronicle*, held rigid positions for and against respectively. The others mainly debated the issues without taking a firm stand. A close examination of individual newspapers shows that a position for or against any issue at any given time cannot lead to the assumption that "the press" was ever unified -- there was no unanimity.<sup>35</sup> To claim that the newspapers misread the people is to assume a relationship that probably did not exist. Given the very personal nature of the press, the low literacy rate in the general population, and the limited circulation, it is unlikely that the press had so much influence or penetration that it could have swayed "public opinion."<sup>36</sup>

Waite, in fact, noted that the St. John's press, like that of Halifax, reflected more the views of the educated minority,<sup>37</sup> and Mayo described the newspapers as

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<sup>35</sup>See Mayo, "Newfoundland and Confederation in the Eighteen-Sixties," 132; see also Waite, *The Life and Times*, 177.

<sup>36</sup>In his study of the British political press, Koss cites (Sir) Sidney Low, editor of the *St. James Gazette* in the 1880s: "Public opinion is a shifting abstraction," with which neither editors nor politicians could keep pace. See Koss, *Rise and Fall of The Political Press in Britain*, 417-418.

<sup>37</sup>Waite, *The Life and Times*, 172.

"parochial and personal,"<sup>38</sup> both of which are not unfair assessments. Nevertheless, Mayo's assertion that Newfoundland's isolation "meant that Newfoundland was out of touch with political thought and discussion on the mainland,"<sup>39</sup> does not square with the evidence of constant referrals to Canadian, British, and American newspapers. In stating the obvious that Confederation was "in no sense a movement indigenous to Newfoundland," Mayo was wrong to suggest that such a proposal was "suddenly introduced in 1864," nor was it a "new idea" received only with suspicion by a "simple, conservative population."<sup>40</sup> Confederation was an idea that was a long time in gestation in Newfoundland just as it was elsewhere.

Waite does not include much detail pertaining to the editors, except in the case of the *Newfoundlander* run by the Shea family, and R.J. Parsons of the *Patriot*, which spoke out against Confederation (as it did about most things). The St. John's *Times* is dismissed as a "commercial paper," and while he quotes the *Public Ledger*, the *Day Book*, and the *Morning Chronicle*, he does not note the Winton family connection with all three, nor the change in ownership at the *Ledger* and subsequent conversion to Confederation in 1866, nor the takeover of the *Day Book* (re-named *Morning Chronicle*) in 1865 by C.F. Bennett, leader of the vigorous anti-confederate campaign. If these details were not so relevant to Waite's broader study -- which stands up

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<sup>38</sup>Mayo, "Newfoundland and Confederation in the Eighteen-Sixties," 138.

<sup>39</sup>Mayo, "Newfoundland and Confederation in the Eighteen-Sixties," 127.

<sup>40</sup>Mayo, "Newfoundland and Confederation in the Eighteen-Sixties," 127.

without them -- they are still vital to understanding how the newspaper press in Newfoundland operated in general, and how it handled this debate in particular.

The relevance of confederation to Newfoundland, especially during the 1860s, was a perplexing question for politically ambitious editors whose uncertainty fuelled the debate. Some were in favour, others were open to the idea, but there was no concerted newspaper campaign for its acceptance. Editors discussed the idea as individuals, keeping their own counsel, choosing their own pet arguments, almost never giving credence to a competitor's opinion. The newspaper press was a powerful medium in many ways, but to suggest that it was collectively unified on almost any issue is an oversimplification. Persuasion of the masses in nineteenth-century Newfoundland, especially during the election campaign in 1869, was undoubtedly best handled by the political candidates "on the stump" in crowded temperance halls, issuing warnings as well as promises.

#### 6.5 An Informed But Cautious Newfoundland Press

Extensive reports from the Quebec conference were carried in most of the Newfoundland newspapers. The *Courier*, still under the direction of Joseph Woods, though it is not clear who was the editor at the time,<sup>41</sup> was especially far-reaching in

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<sup>41</sup>Greene stated that J.I. Little, older brother of Philip Little, was editor of the *Courier* in 1849 (after Seaton left); no source was cited. See Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation*, 207. Pseudonymous letters to the *Courier* in later years also suggested that Robert Pinsent wrote pro-confederate editorials for that newspaper. See e.g., *Courier*, 29 September 1869.

its coverage. It carried the full text of the report from the Quebec conference,<sup>42</sup> and all through the winter months and into spring of 1865, published reports from the *Toronto Globe*, including the full text of a speech by Alexander Galt.<sup>43</sup> George Brown of the *Globe*, and a member of the Canadian Government, was described as the "leading spirit" of the Confederation scheme, and the *Globe*, the "oracle in all matters connected with the details of government of various branches of the future great Western Empire."<sup>44</sup>

Still cautious about Confederation, as were the majority of the press, the *Courier* printed a lecture by Robert J. Pinsent, "native son" and politically ambitious young lawyer, to members of the Athenaeum suggesting that the Quebec resolutions were detrimental to Newfoundland and should be rejected, but he did not reject the idea of Confederation.<sup>45</sup> Later, a public meeting held in front of the Market House on Water Street in the dead of winter was described in the *Courier* as "supremely stale and flat and unprofitable," and attended by some 2,000 people. The merchants who spoke were not in favour of Confederation, and the subject was disposed of, the *Courier* reported, in ten-minute speeches of little substance by "men who run away

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<sup>42</sup>*Courier*, 8 October 1864.

<sup>43</sup>*Courier*, 21 December 1864.

<sup>44</sup>*Courier*, 4 January 1865.

<sup>45</sup>*Courier*, 11 February 1865. Pinsent was later condemned by "Index" in a letter to the *Courier* in 1869 for reversing his position from anti-Confederate to pro-Confederate in the hope of being appointed Attorney General.

from their country houses, their wharves, their shops, their mechanical operations, and return thereto as soon as they have their say." However, Francis Winton, editor of the *Day Book*, now leaning more toward the anti-confederates, said that four thousand had attended.<sup>46</sup>

It could be said that from the many sources offered, the *Courier* gave its readers the most consistent exchange of views on the topic. Official visits to London by George Brown were reported in the New York *Independent* as having "found sympathy with the entire English Cabinet." This was copied in the *Montreal Witness* and from there to the St. John's *Courier*. The *Witness* also provided an editorial including a synopsis of the views on Confederation from other Atlantic area newspapers.<sup>47</sup> Advertisements appeared in the *Courier* (and other St. John's newspapers) from T.M. Connan's Bookstore, for the sale of Thomas D'Arcy McGee's pamphlet, *Notes on Federated Governments, Past and Present*, containing a copy of the Federated Constitution of New Zealand.<sup>48</sup> Debate on Confederation continued each week in the House of Assembly, followed by editorial comment. A slight majority -- 16 of 29 members -- expressed favour, but the question of a vote did not arise. Amendments to the Quebec resolutions to suit Newfoundland had not occurred.

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<sup>46</sup>*Courier*, 15 February 1865.

<sup>47</sup>*Courier*, 26 February 1865.

<sup>48</sup>*Courier*, 1 March 1865. T.M. Connan's Bookstore was located at 212 Water Street, St. John's.



A letter to the *Courier* from "A Bayman," countered the arguments against Confederation, and concluded that Newfoundland would do better within the union.<sup>49</sup> This may or may not have been the same "Bayman" who wrote earlier to say that Confederation would at least offer employment to the hundreds of men working on the roads for 18 pence a day, four days a week, who then had to walk 40 miles to obtain 20 pounds of flour and a half gallon of molasses, and answer to the "growls of the Poor Inquisitors."<sup>50</sup>

In the wake of defeat of the question in New Brunswick, "A Bayman" wrote once more to encourage Newfoundlanders to "approach this subject calmly [and] in an unprejudiced spirit."<sup>51</sup> But the negative vote in New Brunswick had been received with dismay by the Halifax newspaper, *Wesleyan*, which claimed the appeal to the people had been attended with "a vast amount of unblushing bribery -- open drunkenness -- awful profanity and fearful lying." Still, the *Wesleyan* editor hoped the summer session of the Canadian Parliament would put things right.<sup>52</sup> The *Newfoundlander* carried editorials from the London *Times* suggesting that objection to Confederation in the Maritime provinces was "of the most mercantile character" because their trade ran to New England and the Northern states, reason enough to opt for annexation. To prove

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<sup>49</sup>*Courier*, 8 March 1865.

<sup>50</sup>*Courier*, 19 October 1864.

<sup>51</sup>*Courier*, 12 April 1865.

<sup>52</sup>*Courier*, 25 March 1865.

their loyalty to Britain those colonies were urged to fight for their allegiance to Great Britain.<sup>53</sup> Robert Winton, editor of the *St. John's Daily News*, also suggested British subjects were disloyal to deny the Queen her wish for a Canadian Confederation.<sup>54</sup> The *Times* at least acknowledged that the colonies could not be forced into a political alliance against their expressed wishes, but warned those who went against the proposed policy:

We cannot put force upon a dissentient population, but it will be open to us to observe that the contributions made from the Imperial treasury toward colonial administration may be regulated by *our* conceptions of true colonial interests.<sup>55</sup>

Rumours surfaced in the *St. John's* newspapers that British taxpayers were getting tired of paying for the upkeep of garrison troops in the colonies, and that the colonies would be asked to bear at least part of their expense. Burton's editorial in the *Telegraph* claimed such a move was the beginning of an inducement by the imperial government to the colonies to adopt Confederation.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, inducement had started more than a year before, as seen in a letter from Colonial Secretary Edward Cardwell to Governor Anthony Musgrave, published in the *Royal Gazette*, and reprinted in

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<sup>53</sup>London *Times*, 7 March 1865, extract in *Newfoundlander*, 24 April 1865.

<sup>54</sup>*St. John's Daily News*, 17 July 1865, extract of report of the Queen's speech at the close of the Parliamentary session in which she expressed her regret that Confederation had not yet been carried out in Canada.

<sup>55</sup>London *Times*, 21 March 1865, extract in *Newfoundlander*, 24 April 1865

<sup>56</sup>*Telegraph*, 27 December 1865.

several of the local newspapers.<sup>57</sup> Burton, however, as well as others, clung to the maternal image of England even as he clung to the hope that Newfoundland would join Canada:

We hope for our Native land a bright career as a portion of the New Dominion for we believe that our countrymen are more generally favourable to Confederation than they were a year ago, and that they will in the year we have just entered upon, be prepared to investigate any proposal ... for stepping out of our present isolation and insignificance, into the union and strength of the British American Confederacy, backed as it will be for years to come, by the whole power and glory of Great Britain.<sup>58</sup>

Burton, more than most newspaper editors in Newfoundland, made constant references to England as the "mother country." His perception was that England would always defend Newfoundland's commerce "from all predators," and in return ask "only our affection."<sup>59</sup> The pro-confederates in Newfoundland had come to the conclusion that the Canadian tariff was "not such a formidable burthen" when compared with the Newfoundland tariff. Burton was not the only one who believed it was certain merchants who had convinced "the people" that they would be heavily taxed within Confederation. The monopolists, he said, had their day in Newfoundland; it was time

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<sup>57</sup>*Royal Gazette*, 27 December 1864. The letter from Cardwell to Musgrave ordered him to put into effect the resolutions agreed to in Quebec, the main concerns being that the Crown retain the right to pardon prisoners and that the composition of the legislative council be harmonious. Other details, it said, could wait until the bill on federation went before the British Parliament.

<sup>58</sup>*Telegraph*, 1 January 1868.

<sup>59</sup>*Telegraph*, 7 January 1863.

"the people" had theirs. But would they, he asked, "accept their manifest destiny."<sup>60</sup> Here might be considered again the question of whether the newspaper press reflected or constructed public opinion; whether it represented shifts in the mood of the public, or whether it directed public attitudes.<sup>61</sup> Some historians have insisted that a literate citizenry is necessary for a population to participate in the political life of a community, in the sense that they are both interested and educated to reflect on the issues and powerful enough to act.<sup>62</sup> These criteria are ideal, but were largely absent in Newfoundland at the time. Pressure from London on the colonial governors to "do all in their power" to effect colonial union was not great in Newfoundland. But people did not have to be literate to be persuaded by powerful politicians that their sons, "married and unmarried," could be conscripted to defend Canada.<sup>63</sup> Such fears propounded by politicians in the newspapers, were undoubtedly carried by word of mouth among the majority of the people.

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<sup>60</sup>*Telegraph*, 7 January 1863.

<sup>61</sup>This particular question regarding the functions of the press is discussed in Jones, *Powers of the Press*, 87-97. The discussion examines the concerns of Victorians who saw journalism, especially anonymous journalism, as "vacillating and arrogant," reflecting only the sensibilities of a powerful minority.

<sup>62</sup>See Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Hans Speier, eds., *Propaganda and Communication In World History* 3 vols. (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979), v.1, 13-14.

<sup>63</sup>Letter to the editor of the *Newfoundlander* from C.F. Bennett., 12 January 1865.

Politics changed in spring, 1865 when Conservative Frederick Carter was sworn in as Prime Minister following Hugh Hoyles's resignation to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Carter, who had attended the Quebec Conference in 1864 with Ambrose Shea, brought Liberals Shea and John Kent into a coalition.<sup>64</sup> In the general election that followed in November, Confederation was merely a side issue, but Shea, the most outspoken confederate in Newfoundland, now had the attention of the anti-confederate *Halifax Citizen* which claimed he was forced to renounce his support of the measure "at the hustings" if he hoped to be re-elected in Placentia-St. Mary's in 1865.<sup>65</sup> In a letter to the *Citizen*, dated 14 December 1865, Shea said:

I have uniformly expressed my opinion in favour of this question and never more decidedly than during the election that has just terminated. I stated clearly that I would not accept an election conditioned on any compromise of my views on this important subject, and I was returned by a larger vote than was ever before given to a candidate in the district.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Philip McCann noted that the defection of Kent and Shea "marked the beginning of the end of the identification of Catholics with Liberals and Protestants with Conservatives." See McCann, "The Politics of Denominational Education," *The Vexed Question*, 47. This change might also account to some degree the absence of religion as a contentious issue in the Confederation debate in the late 1860s, although it was raised in the aftermath of the 1869 election as one of the reasons for rejection. See also J.K. Hiller, "Confederation Defeated, The Newfoundland Election of 1869," *Newfoundland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Essays in Interpretation* (1980).

<sup>65</sup>*Halifax Citizen*, 5 December 1865 cited in the *St. John's Courier*, 27 January 1866.

<sup>66</sup>Shea's letter to the *Halifax Citizen*, datelined St. John's, Newfoundland, 14 December 1865. See: *Courier*, 27 January 1866.

Out of five candidates for that riding, (Placentia/St. Mary's), the three in favour of Confederation were elected. The editor of the *Courier* agreed, in an editorial note, that Shea had been misrepresented by the Halifax newspaper.

At the start of 1865, newspaper discussion of Confederation had escalated. James Seaton kept a sharp eye on issues debated by editors in the other colonies and abroad and suggested others do the same. The Protestant *Witness* of Montreal, for example, was quoted in the *Express* as interested in keeping the "two Canadas" together as they were. Full federation, its editor said, would mean giving too much in financial aid to the Maritime colonies.<sup>67</sup> Seaton suggested that the "grumblers" among local editors might see this as an incentive to pay more attention to their Canadian counterparts.<sup>68</sup> E.D. Shea had paid attention, and was quick to notice and agree with contemporaries in the "sister provinces":

... there is scarcely a reason that the others can urge that does not suit our circumstances and in this state of things we naturally look with eagerness to what they say and do.<sup>69</sup>

Other colonies were more prosperous than Newfoundland, Shea said, and none were more in need of change. Given the depressed state of the fishery, a demand for change was inevitable, "even if Confederation had never been proposed." And yet, he complained, the cry against Confederation came from those who were unable to

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<sup>67</sup>*Express*, 5 January 1865.

<sup>68</sup>*Express*, 5 January 1865.

<sup>69</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1865.

suggest a remedy. Pauperism was part of the evidence of unrewarded labour, while poor relief had destroyed self-reliance:

For the last sixteen years the efforts of one Government after another have professedly been directed to its abandonment. Every kind of means within our reach has been exhausted with the only effect of showing how impotent we are in this respect.<sup>70</sup>

It is clear that the Sheas were not averse to changing an argument to suit their own agenda. At another time, for other reasons, a depiction of Newfoundland on the brink of famine caused Ambrose Shea to accuse rival newspaper editors of gross exaggeration. Now on the threshold of a new political alignment that some suggested would mainly benefit pro-confederate politicians, E.D. Shea said such a "miserable existence" would not be tolerated within a confederated country. Admitting Newfoundland's impotence to cure its own ills, Shea was confident that a more powerful government would have more means to address poverty. A unified Canada, he said, would also provide an open labour market for Newfoundlanders who would then be "entitled to the aid and protection of the general government."<sup>71</sup> Shea absolved himself of advocating a mass exodus, but said "anything is better than starvation."<sup>72</sup> To those who might argue that Confederation should keep Newfoundlanders at home to

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<sup>70</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1865.

<sup>71</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1865.

<sup>72</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1865. See also *Newfoundlander* editorial, 8 December 1864 for criticism of "men of capital" unable to develop Newfoundland mineral resources.

open up its resources, he saw the prosecution of the Bank fishery and the extraction of mineral wealth as long term prospects that only an influential and unified Canadian government could accomplish. No one in Newfoundland, he said, was capable of creating long-term employment.<sup>73</sup> This was undoubtedly a reference to C.F. Bennett who reportedly sank hundreds of thousands of dollars into mining exploration without much to show for it up to that time. How much of Shea's rationale had to do with concern for the unemployed, as opposed to his and his family's business interest in labour contracts, is open to question.<sup>74</sup>

One of the grumblers referred to by Seaton was Henry Winton Jr. who was still in charge of the *Public Ledger* in 1865. A few days before the legislature resumed for the new year, Winton, who may have been ill at the time,<sup>75</sup> wrote his strongest editorial on the issue of Confederation. He advocated a public vote, and warned his readers to be "wary of accepting the smooth language of hypocrisy as truth," to try to weed out the irrelevant from what was "honest and comprehensible."<sup>76</sup> He warned

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<sup>73</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 5 January 1865.

<sup>74</sup>The Sheas were in the business of shipping and in recruiting men to work on the railway in Nova Scotia during this period. In 1869, Ambrose Shea engaged 800 men for work on the railway in Canada, a "godsend," he said, as not one of them "would be paupers next winter." See *Newfoundlander*, 19 February 1869.

<sup>75</sup>Winton died only a year and a half later at the age of 49. Obituaries were carried in the *Royal Gazette*, *Express*, *Newfoundlander*, *Telegraph*, *Courier*, in April 1866. See Gert Crosbie, *Births, deaths, marriages in Newfoundland newspapers* 12 volumes, 1825-1889, (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987).

<sup>76</sup>*Public Ledger*, 24 January 1865.



members of the House of Assembly that they were sent to act "according to the wishes of the people," and not for "their own selfish ends."<sup>77</sup> Winton knew that large schemes such as railroads were under consideration by "men already accustomed to such things,"<sup>78</sup> but he was sure they would not extend to the Atlantic coast of "this tight little island." Nor did he think Newfoundland could gain "one jot" by handing over its fisheries and minerals to the jurisdiction of Canadians. Nevertheless he wanted all of it debated and put to the people. His lack of confidence was in Newfoundland politicians whom he was convinced were self-seekers of power and influence.

Newspapers in Newfoundland had always had exchange with American counterparts. In terms of style or format, American influence was perhaps not directly felt until after the two younger brothers of Henry Winton Jr., who had spent time in America in the 1850s, returned to the trade in Newfoundland.<sup>79</sup> In 1860, Robert Winton started the *St. John's Daily News and Journal of Commerce*. He was joined by

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<sup>77</sup>*Public Ledger*, 24 January 1865.

<sup>78</sup>Undoubtedly, Winton was referring to George Brown, the *Toronto Globe* newspaper publisher, and politician, one of the driving forces behind the promotion of Confederation.

<sup>79</sup>Francis Winton married an American woman, whose brother Corporal George Peckham was killed in battle near Knoxville during the American Civil War in 1863. Robert Winton also married an American, Frances Augusta Cady of North Adams, Massachusetts in 1856 and was, at the time, assistant editor of the *North Adams Weekly Transcript*. Both Wintons and their American brides returned to St. John's before 1860.

his brother Francis, who stayed in the partnership<sup>80</sup> only six months, then left to start his own newspaper, the *Day Book*. The differences among the Winton newsmen were evident in their styles as well as their political points of view. Henry Jr. was ever cautious, and wanted to know with certainty if Newfoundland was to become "an outpost of Canada,"<sup>81</sup> a term used repeatedly, as was "selling the country," by anti-confederate editors and politicians in the years following. Robert Winton was impulsive, but decidedly in favour of Confederation despite his dislike for responsible government<sup>82</sup>, and Francis, at first in favour, was later against Confederation. The latter two quarrelled in print while they fended off "yankee" sniping from some of the "nativist" editors. It is in these seemingly minor details of the way journalism was practiced that its extremely local nature predominated and revealed the character of the press which was often petty and unproductive.

So definitive was his opinion, Robert Winton considered anyone against union

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<sup>80</sup>The word "partnership" is used cautiously. Without documented evidence, whether these were actual partnerships, or whether a proprietorship was legally separate from a printing, publishing, or editorial contractual relationship is open to question.

<sup>81</sup>*Public Ledger*, 24 January 1865. The phrase "outpost of Canada" was used in one of a series of letters to the editor of the *Day Book*, 23 January 1865.

<sup>82</sup>Robert Winton might have later gone to live in Toronto. Vague references suggest he contributed to the Toronto *Empire*. His only daughter, Annie M. Winton married W.C. Mott, a compositor, in Toronto, 22 March 1883. See Crosbie, *Births, deaths, marriages in Newfoundland newspapers*, vol. 9.

as "prejudiced and shortsighted." He attacked Thomas Glen's<sup>83</sup> views, published as a series of letters in the *Day Book*, suggesting that Glen had chosen the "appropriate vehicle for the airing of himself and his absurdities,"<sup>84</sup> motivated by self-interest. Newfoundland was a "muddle of poverty and politics" that Glen's letters on Confederation could never sort out. To Francis Winton, Glen's letters were a "service to the country." Such examples showed not only the acrimony between two brothers in the newspaper business, but revealed as well the web of partisan politics in which most of the newspaper editors were entangled.

Glen's letters against Confederation were also criticized by Seaton of the *Express* who thought that Glen's primary concern was his own political future. Being a Protestant in a Catholic district, Glen had need for concern, Seaton said, and Glen's "advanced age and limited means" would preclude his seeking a seat in the federal House of Commons. The tone of newspaper debate among many of the editors, which seldom rose above personal invective, was hardly conducive to informed public opinion, though it likely titillated the few hundred who bought and read the newspapers. In contrast, Waite made the point that Nova Scotia's easy railway access along its south shore made newspapers "part of the public life" of that province. This was not the case in Newfoundland in the 1860s. In the summer of 1869, the year of

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<sup>83</sup>Thomas Glen was a Presbyterian Scot, anti-confederate merchant, and Liberal MHA for Ferryland from 1842 to 1874, while also holding several offices in government finance.

<sup>84</sup>*St. John's Daily News*, 24 January 1865.

the vigorous election campaign on the question of Confederation, communities as close to St. John's as Topsail and Harbour Main waited two weeks for mail. Conception Bay, the *Courier* suggested, was "as distant from St. John's as from England."<sup>85</sup>

#### 6.7 C.F. Bennett, the Sheas, and the Power of the Press

After the *Morning Chronicle* replaced the *Day Book* in 1865 and was under the control of Charles Fox Bennett, the newspaper hammered away at the disadvantages of Confederation. Frances Winton remained as editor, and continued to be listed as proprietor.<sup>86</sup> Equipped with the latest and best available press,<sup>87</sup> it was large in format, with clean type, and attractively presented. New marketing was introduced: subscriptions went for one year, six months, or for three months while the House of Assembly was in session; and the newspaper was hawked on the street for one and a half pence (later two pence) every day of the week except Sundays. These innovative ideas, possibly acquired during his sojourn in America, Winton claimed boosted circulation and sales higher than any other newspaper in the colony.

A comprehensive study of all of Bennett's enterprises which might suggest the

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<sup>85</sup>*Courier* editorial criticizing the postal service, 15 January 1870.

<sup>86</sup>No business record, nor government registration for the *Morning Chronicle* was found. Suzanne Ellison stated that the paper was started with a loan from C. F. Bennett. See Ellison, *Historical Directory*, 93. No source cited.

<sup>87</sup>The appearance of the paper is self-evident; references were made to a new press, but unfortunately the name of the press is not mentioned.

numbers of persons he employed has not been done. But a cursory look at the advertising columns of the *Morning Chronicle* of the 1860s and beyond, and of most of the newspapers in the previous decades, shows that Bennett was by far the most diversified capitalist in Newfoundland.<sup>88</sup> It stands to reason, in so many areas of trade, commerce, and manufacture, his influence, as a politician and as an employer, must have been great, if not intimidating. Sometimes criticized for being non-native, having no family of his own in Newfoundland and no permanent attachment to Newfoundland, it was often suggested that he was in the Island to "make a little money which he goes elsewhere to spend."<sup>89</sup> His editor suggested sarcastically, that if a man were valued for the number of children and the permanency of his abode, then the paupers in Newfoundland had a good "stake in the country." It was well to remember, he said, that Bennett's money invested in Newfoundland "by choice" could as easily be withdrawn. A target of such nativist slurs, the wealthy Bennett was averse to direct taxation, one of his main objections to Confederation. Adam Scott, then

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<sup>88</sup>Under the editorial direction of Stephen Daniel between 1844 and 1846, the *Courier* was a constant supporter of C.F. Bennett's industrial and business endeavours, including the harvesting of whales, whale oil refining; sawmilling; bone dust manufacture for use in agriculture; road and bridge construction between Placentia Bay and Conception Bay for agriculture and shipbuilding; development of a water supply for St. John's; establishment of fire and life insurance business, as well as a labour-generating brewery. See, e.g., *Courier*, 28 October 1844; 4 November 1844; January 1845; 20 May 1846. See also J.K. Hiller, "Bennett, Charles James Fox." *DCB*, XI, 65-69. See also Carla Wheaton, " 'The Trade in this Place is in a Very Critical State' : R.G. Dunn & Company and the St. John's Business Community, 1855-1874," *Acadiensis*, XXIX, 2 (Spring 2000), 120-137.

<sup>89</sup>*Public Ledger*, 6 January 1868; re-printed in *Morning Chronicle*, 7 January 1868.

editor of the *Ledger*,<sup>90</sup> and in favour of Confederation, suggested that the supremacy of such men in Newfoundland was fast dwindling. In fact, Bennett won the election in 1869 by an overwhelming majority vote,<sup>91</sup> most likely because of his personal visits to the outlying electoral districts and his message on the hustings. It might well have been that he had no need to purchase a newspaper to promote his view against Canadian confederation, given his powerful stature in the colony. He likely saw the value in the printed word, in its staying power, its transferability, and its potential to shape opinion among the elite -- the leaders in the community -- the decision makers, those who could persuade the masses.

The *Morning Chronicle* reprinted every available negative item on Confederation, particularly from some Halifax papers whose editors were of like mind. News of the Nova Scotia petition to the House of Commons for a repeal of the Union shortly after its institution in 1867 was warmly received in the St. John's *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>92</sup> Seemingly crest-fallen, Shea lamented the move, suggesting the motive for Nova Scotia's petition was based on "temper and personal resentment,"

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<sup>90</sup>After the death of Henry Winton Jr., in 1866, the proprietorship of the *Public Ledger* passed to his widow, Elizabeth Brown Winton. She hired the Wesleyan School Master, Adam Scott, as editor. He remained with the newspaper until 1874. Scott embraced the idea of Confederation, creating a shift in the ultra conservative policies of the *Ledger* of the past 40 years, as the Winton family's influence quickly faded.

<sup>91</sup>See Hiller, "Confederation Defeated: The Newfoundland Election of 1869," 82.

<sup>92</sup>See extract from the *Novascotian*, published in St. John's *Morning Chronicle*, 7 January 1868.

inferring Joseph Howe's disgruntlement at losing the glory to Charles Tupper. Conceding the lack of reference to the people, Shea suggested Nova Scotians would not have wished to be seen as fanatics in "a case well known to be hopeless;" that the "animus of the non-Confederates" ran more fiercely against the man who accomplished union, rather than the method employed.<sup>93</sup> In an extremely rare, if brief coalescence, Shea and Scott saw eye to eye: "We quite agree with the *Ledger* that had the man been Mr. Howe instead of Dr. Tupper, his work would have been approved." For many years, Shea said, Howe had "educated the province in opinions favourable to Confederation" but circumstances at the time found him out of position to "put a hand to the work he had matured."<sup>94</sup> How fortunate were Nova Scotians and New Brunswickers to have cheap Canadian manufactures, Shea had suggested earlier, commodities that would be "welcomed in Newfoundland."<sup>95</sup> If Newfoundlanders were not willing to embrace "new ideas and habits of life" that only Confederation could offer, they would remain "depressed and impoverished in the midst of unworked resources."<sup>96</sup> Shea was soon reminded by his most formidable rival of similar

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<sup>93</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 30 June 1868.

<sup>94</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 30 June 1868. Shea was probably referring to the fact that Howe had not attended the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences because he was away performing his job as Fisheries Commissioner. See also Waite, *Life and Times*, 210-211.

<sup>95</sup>*Newfoundlander* 8 January 1868.

<sup>96</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 3 January 1868.

predictions in the *Newfoundlander* in 1854, prior to responsible government, that his brother Ambrose would make the outports wealthy villages with every man employed. "Does [he] want us to republish his opinions and ... show how far short he fell of the fact?" asked the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>97</sup>

As the *Morning Chronicle* made the rejection of Confederation its main purpose, any argument that Shea put forward in its favour was immediately challenged, regardless of its rationality. While most editors cleaved to the notion that Newfoundland's fishery and other resources would not be jeopardized by Britain, the *Newfoundlander* stood virtually alone in its editorial position that the colony was powerless in international relations. Although Shea and Bennett had gone head to head on every issue pertaining to Confederation,<sup>98</sup> settlement of the French Shore problem was perhaps the most confounding.

#### 6.8 Shea's Last Hope: The French Shore Question

The ongoing dispute about French access to a large part of the coast of Newfoundland affected not only the fishery but also development of mineral resources. Given Bennett's extensive interest in that area, it would likely have been useful to have the question resolved sooner than later. But Bennett had warned that, under a federated

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<sup>97</sup>*Morning Chronicle*, 4 January 1868.

<sup>98</sup>See letters to the editor from C.F. Bennett. *Newfoundlander*, 2 December 1864; 12 December 1864; 12 January 1865.



union, all of Newfoundland's resources, including its minerals, would be transferred to Canada.<sup>99</sup> That idea along with the threat of direct taxation suggests some transparency in Bennett's argument, made weaker by the contention that it was the fault of the Newfoundland government for not having passed laws to protect its resources. Action by the Home authorities on behalf of "this ancient and loyal colony," would have been inevitable, declared the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>100</sup> But neither the Newfoundland government nor the newspaper editors made any impression on the British government. A petition from the Newfoundland legislature to the House of Lords in 1867 for land and mineral grants on the French Shore presented by the Colonial Secretary, Earl of Carnarvon, failed, according to Carnarvon, because the convention offered was turned down by the Colony.<sup>101</sup> Seaton of the *Express* said that convention had never been communicated to the Newfoundland legislature, and quoted correspondence of 4 March 1861 between the Governor, Sir Alexander Bannerman, and the Duke of Newcastle to show how little Carnarvon "knew or cared about Newfoundland's inequity," or of its legislature's untenable position when it came to the French Shore.<sup>102</sup> How less significant local journalists and their obscure newspapers must have been.

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<sup>99</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 12 December 1864.

<sup>100</sup>*Morning Chronicle*, 22 June 1868.

<sup>101</sup>*Express*, 23 June 1868.

<sup>102</sup>*Express*, 23 June 1868.

Newfoundland's voice, Shea said, would never be heard in Britain on a question that "so seriously involves the interests of France." Instead, he suggested a different approach through Confederation might work:

The object we seek must be sought by those who have the voice and importance of a nation, and we must form a part of the only nation that invites us to union, the Dominion of Canada, if we really hope for recognition of our Fishery rights.<sup>103</sup>

It was time Newfoundlanders rid themselves of the delusion that the House of Commons would act in favour of the colony when international treaties were in place, said Shea:

We must bear well in mind that the primary consideration with the Parliament as well as the Government of England is the maintenance of the present good understanding with France... it is simply part of the policy of the nation... whatever Government may be in power....<sup>104</sup>

He knew the rules of diplomacy foreshadowed any attempt to risk complications with France, especially on such a question as the fisheries of Newfoundland. But if Newfoundland were to be part of the nation of Canada, both Britain and France would no longer be dealing with the "vapoury grumblings" of a "handful of poor colonists." Shea had come to see such reasoning as an "obvious principle of commonsense,"<sup>105</sup> an assumption he hoped Newfoundlanders shared. Even among the pro-confederate editors, he could not find an ally to press this last hope.

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<sup>103</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 23 June 1868.

<sup>104</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 7 July 1868.

<sup>105</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 7 July 1868, *ibid.*

Adam Scott's and the *Ledger's* favourable attitude toward Confederation did not extend to an agreement with Shea on the French Shore question, proving once more the habitual friction among newspaper editors, but also their attachment to Britain. The French Shore, in Scott's opinion, similar to that of Parsons of the *Patriot*, Talbot, Burton, and the rest, was a simple matter of justice and should be resolved "irrespective of Confederation or any other scheme...." Scott could not conceive of Britain being unjust; such lack of patriotism on Shea's part would, he said, meet with the contempt it deserved.<sup>106</sup> His use of the word "patriotism" was certain to invite a retort from Shea on the former's non-native status, though he was then a resident of 17 years. As for the issue of justice in the French Shore question, Shea said that no two sets of lawyers had ever agreed on it.<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, M'Coubrey of the *St. John's Times*, pinned his hopes on the possible election of James J. Grieve, former resident, and father of Walter Grieve, to the Imperial Parliament, whose knowledge of Newfoundland might dislodge the notion that the colony was nothing more than a "little fishing village enshrouded in fog one-half of the year."<sup>108</sup> M'Coubrey complained that the local legislature was overrun with "useless drones" whose numbers should be reduced to save taxpayers' money. So it went among the local editors. Although aiming for the same goals, and on some points agreeing, ultimately they

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<sup>106</sup>*Public Ledger*, 8 July 1868.

<sup>107</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 10 July 1868.

<sup>108</sup>*Times* (St. John's), 11 July 1868.

ended in disagreement on how to proceed. What sometimes appeared as honest effort at political integration, usually amounted to little more than editorial puffery. Letters to the editor on the question of Confederation, although expressing serious concern about the future, were rarely more revealing. With the exception of C.F. Bennett's and Thomas Glen's, virtually all, even the most thoughtful and informed letters were signed pseudonymously. The contributions to the Confederation debate in the newspapers by "Index," "Vindex," "Comus," or "Bayman," provide little concrete evidence of "public opinion."

#### 6.9 1869: A Critical Year: Disunity, Dallying, and Unusual Alliances

Within the anti-confederate newspaper discourse in Newfoundland, unusual alliances were formed. The Irish Catholic journalist, Thomas Talbot's serialized commentary against Confederation ran in the *Morning Chronicle* for several weeks in 1869. Far from editorial unity, this was more likely a marriage of temporary convenience. Talbot's "blood, thunder, and lightning style," previously criticized by Winton on other grounds, now served the *Chronicle's* purpose. A master of emotional rhetoric, his comparison of Newfoundland in Confederation to Ireland's union with Great Britain dredged up "traitors" from a hundred years before, still "cursed as bitterly at the present day."<sup>109</sup> Talbot's most substantial arguments were that

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas Talbot, "A Few Brief Observations on Confederation Its Nature and Effects," *Morning Chronicle*, 15 September 1869.

Newfoundland would have no voice in making laws, and would suffer unlimited taxation. These, and contentions about surrender of fisheries management, Crown lands and mineral resources, and the debt from railroads and canals from which Newfoundland could not benefit, were the substance of editorials in the *Morning Chronicle* and now the *Courier*, from August to November of 1869.

In February of 1869, draft terms of Confederation were debated in the House of Assembly. In the *Patriot*, the terms were dismissed as "impudent" in blatantly "selling the colony" to a "foreign power" bent on taxing the colonies. Scott of the *Public Ledger* boosted his own confidence by carrying disparaging editorials about Bennett and Glen from the *New Brunswick Telegraph*. He decried the retreat of the *Courier*, which, by the summer of 1869 was referred to as another "Bennett mouthpiece."<sup>110</sup> The *Courier* editor claimed his change of heart was based on principle, noting that the "weal and woe" of Newfoundland hung on the question of Confederation<sup>111</sup> and was dismayed that some of the Wesleyan clergy had become too personally involved in the political campaign.<sup>112</sup> Before the end of summer, the *Courier* had presented all of Bennett's financial arguments, and through the fall, re-printed anti-confederate

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<sup>110</sup>*Public Ledger*, 8 August 1869.

<sup>111</sup>*Courier*, 11 August 1869.

<sup>112</sup>Vague references were made to Wesleyan support of Confederation in Newfoundland, and evidence had been reported long before 1869 that the Reverend Dr. Richey of Prince Edward Island published a pamphlet, "A Plea for Confederation of the Colonies of British North America" in which he stated that Newfoundland would join the union. See *Patriot*, 13 April 1867.

editorials from Bennett's *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>113</sup>

C. F. Bennett could not rely on his newspapers to convince the mass of voters. He and his merchant friend, Walter Grieve, were already on their way in Bennett's vessel, *Mary Austin*, specifically assigned to the anti-confederate campaign, to visit every prominent locality in every district.<sup>114</sup> "Let the people make no promises until they hear what these gentlemen have to say," warned the editors of the *Chronicle* and the *Courier*.<sup>115</sup> Whether this was in response to the up-scaling of the issue, and the sudden appearance of *The Comet*,<sup>116</sup> established to combat the Bennett forces prior to the November election,<sup>117</sup> is not certain. *The Comet* was printed by Burton at the *Telegraph* office; R.J. Pinsent and W.V. Whiteway, incumbent candidates, were reportedly the owners and publishers. Described as a "little contemptible fly sheet," the editor of the *Courier* claimed that R.J. Pinsent wrote the editorials, reducing Confederation to a choice between "good West India Rum" and the "deleterious

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<sup>113</sup>*Courier*, 4 September 1869.

<sup>114</sup>*Morning Chronicle*, 20 August 1869. See also MacWhirter, "A Political History of Newfoundland, 1865-1874," 42.

<sup>115</sup>*Chronicle*, [?] September 1869; *Courier*, 4 September 1869.

<sup>116</sup>No newspaper archive holdings of the *Comet* are extant. One copy of one issue, 30 October 1869, Vol. 1, No. 25, was located in the Sir Robert Bond Papers, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland. References to the demise of the *Comet* following the November, 1869 election are seen in extant newspapers of the period.

<sup>117</sup>*Chronicle*, 10 September 1869; *Courier*, 11 September 1869.

'Scabby Willy'" produced in Canada.<sup>118</sup>

The draft terms of union agreed upon "subject to appeal to the people" were published in the *Comet*. The preceding editorial, in an unprecedented strategy, offered copies free of charge:

... most of those who go to the polls will, we presume, be able to read -- and those who cannot read can get their friends and relatives to read to them ... We say then let those who can, read for themselves -- let those who cannot read, listen to those who can.<sup>119</sup>

According to the *Courier*, the *Comet* editor, believed to be Pinsent, had said the "conversion" of the *Courier* to anti-Confederate views "turned upon a printing job going the wrong way."<sup>120</sup> The *Courier* editor admitted he had been offered the job of printing the new consolidated colonial laws by Pinsent, then commissioner for those laws. At the same time, Pinsent reportedly submitted an editorial to the *Courier* repudiating the letters signed "Index" carried in that newspaper, and committing the

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<sup>118</sup>*Courier*, 11 September 1869. It is conjecture, but there seems to play here some allusion to Pinsent's personal taste in rum, which may have had at the time a damning effect on his chances of getting elected, given his family's long history of involvement in the temperance movement. If so, it goes to show the passions that could be enlivened in the heat of a political campaign, and the role of the press in creating them.

<sup>119</sup>*The Comet*, 30 October 1869. As far as can be determined, this was the first time a newspaper was distributed free of charge. According to the *Courier*, the *Comet* ceased publication following the 1869 general election. The editor of the *Courier* claimed it had cost Pinsent and Whiteway £2.10s per 500 copies "scattered gratis broadcast over the country." See *Courier*, 1 December 1869.

<sup>120</sup>*Courier*, 29 September 1869, citing the *Comet*, 28 September 1869.

*Courier* to the "unconditional advocacy of Confederate principles":

... this printing job was to be the purchase price of our support of the present Confederate administration; and although we indignantly refused to publish the Editorial, and for such a paltry consideration barter our independence, we are nevertheless charged with inconsistency by the political chameleon, himself, a short time since, one of the most rabid Anti-Confederates who in the most vivid language denounced Confederation when he was in the Legislative Council, and was chairman of the Anti-Confederate public meeting, but who turned his coat hoping to secure an Attorney Generalship...<sup>121</sup>

This revelation suggests Pinsent may have written the pro-confederate editorials in the *Courier* until it switched allegiance to Bennett, after which the proprietor, Woods took the editorial chair. His concern that Wesleyan clergy were too involved in the campaign is further evidence of his presence in the war of words between the *Courier* and the Presbyterian editor, Seaton of the *Express*, who was described as a "hireling of Shea and the confederate candidates," a curious charge, given the public acrimony between the two. Distrust and suspicion were nurtured. From Bennett's generous land grants, and rumours that he was planning annexation to the United States, to the *Comet's* alleged stirring up sectarian animosity between Wesleyans and Churchmen [Anglicans] in Greenspond, to Shea's "selling the country," and offering up Newfoundland's "hardy seamen" to Canada's Navy, all contributed to the political propaganda.

Never to be outdone, the *Patriot*, in an unusual, if not unprecedented move,

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<sup>121</sup>*Courier*, 29 September 1869.



appealed to the women of Newfoundland to support the anti-confederates, despite their exclusion at the polls. One of the first acts of the Canadian Parliament, said R. J. Parsons (if, indeed, it was Parsons writing, and not Thomas Talbot, or John Valentine Nugent) would be to subject Newfoundland to the Militia law, which meant that "every man in the country from sixteen years of age to sixty" would be "dragged from their homes to act as soldiers" in the event of Fenian or other raids, to "stand as targets for American rifle bullets."<sup>122</sup>

Mothers! Daughters, Sisters! Spurn the schemers from you who will ask  
for your father's, husband's or your brother's vote to sell your country...  
To ye women of Newfoundland! We appeal with confidence for we  
know from a quarter of a century of experience that you were always  
ready to lend the weight of your inestimable intelligence whenever the  
liberty of the people was threatened or endangered.<sup>123</sup>

Such emotional and patronizing rhetoric was not seen to the same extent in the other newspapers, though women were lauded for their Christian charity.

In contrast, personal insult related to differences over Confederation went on among the newspaper editors to the end of the year. Seaton of the *Express* noted that 13 anti-confederates were elected in districts where the majority were Irish Catholics who had been reminded of the union of England and Ireland. In Protestant districts, he said voters had been bribed with "treating" or with work on the roads; and on the

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<sup>122</sup>*Patriot*, 4 October 1869.

<sup>123</sup>*Patriot*, 4 October 1869. See also *Courier*, 6 October 1869.

south coast, threatened that bait traffic with St. Peter's would end.<sup>124</sup> In the aftermath of the political exercise, a period of calm followed. Ordinary community events such as charitable fundraising, theatre performances and temperance parades allowed for the settling down of tensions. But although the anti-confederates swept the field in 1869 (Shea was badly beaten by Bennett in Placentia/St. Mary's), Bennett did not sustain a personal following for very long. Within four years of his administration, old sectarian feelings, noticeably absent in the newspapers during the campaign, were again in evidence. Bennett was condemned by editors who had helped put him in office. He was said to have a "Roman Catholic government" which evoked "bitter and intense feeling" because "*not even one*" liberal Protestant had been returned in the northern and western districts in the most recent election.<sup>125</sup> Neighbour had been arrayed against neighbour, and the Bennett administration had "ignored the rights of Protestants."<sup>126</sup> In summer of 1875, Bennett prepared for a permanent move back to England, "his own country."<sup>127</sup>

## 6.10

## Conclusion

The politically partisan nature of the newspaper press, particularly of the

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<sup>124</sup>*Express*, 25 November 1869.

<sup>125</sup>*Courier*, 2 January 1875.

<sup>126</sup>*Courier*, 2 January 1875.

<sup>127</sup>*Courier*, 24 July 1875.

nineteenth century is a subject of much attention in journalism history. The patterns of alliances between newspapers and politics is well documented as the press and politics have always depended on each other for their existence. Park said that newspaper editors responded to a compelling desire to discuss political matters long before they were officially permitted to attend parliamentary debates.<sup>128</sup> They were usually at the centre of political organization contributing to the growth of partisan politics both as journalists and as politicians.<sup>129</sup> Newspaper editors instigated ideas and arguments that helped create social conditions and political systems, especially at the local level. Their newspaper titles and mottos conveyed political messages to attract readers, but also impressed upon their minds the thinking and attitudes of proprietors and editors. Their pledges to "objective" political analysis were usually more rhetorical than real, but the Confederation debates in the Newfoundland press in the 1860s, in particular, provided for the first time, exchanges on a wide scale between Newfoundland editors and other British North American colonies.

Whatever their influence, which is difficult to gauge, it is clear that a news network on the Confederation issue beginning in the late 1830s included the Newfoundland newspaper fraternity who were fully aware and engaged in the

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<sup>128</sup>Robert E. Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," *The American Journal of Sociology*, XXIX, 3, (November 1923), 273-289, 279.

<sup>129</sup>See, among numerous historical accounts, Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press*; Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*; Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*; Gerald Baldasty, "The Press and Politics in the Age of Jackson," *Journalism Monographs*, 89, August, 1984, 1-28.

discussion. Yet, as forums of debate, the newspapers were perhaps more accurately described as political platforms for the views of their owners, editors, and political party friends and patrons. Though they failed ever to resolve the issue, in the most expectant 1860s it was the best example of partisan politics in the Newfoundland press to that time.

The debate was spent after the 1869 general election, but it did not completely disappear. With the commencement of the railway survey in the spring of 1875 at a reported cost of \$70,000, the question of Confederation loomed again. The survey would provide employment -- "a death blow to pauper relief"<sup>130</sup> -- but poverty remained, control of the French Shore was still denied, the costs of pauper relief continued to escalate, and Confederation remained a possible solution. According to the next newspaper to take the field, the *Terra Nova Advocate*, in 1888, the subject was again "occupying the minds of all classes of our community and country generally" and preparing once more to send a delegation to Ottawa.<sup>131</sup> In the early 1890s, a tariff war between Newfoundland and Canada precluded any thought of union. Newfoundland was then showing some sign of diversification as mines and railroads were developed, and hundreds found employment outside the fishery. In

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<sup>130</sup>*Courier*, 23 October 1875, a blatant reverse of editorial position.

<sup>131</sup>*Terra Nova Advocate*, 28 March 1888. The newspaper was started in 1875 as the *St. John's Advertiser*; its title changed to *Terra Nova Advocate and Political Observer* in 1876; and changed to *Terra Nova Advocate* in 1880. No issues are extant after 2 June 1892. See Ellison, *Directory*, 161.

1894, with the return of A.B. Morine to Newfoundland after his defeat at the polls in Queen's County, Nova Scotia, an extract from the Halifax *Chronicle*, printed in the *Twillingate Sun* suggested that Confederation would be "sprung on the people again." In 1895, James Murray published *The Anti-Confederate* with the support of a handful of St. John's merchants calling themselves the Anti-Confederate League.<sup>132</sup> The first run of 1000 copies was distributed free. But as its first issue was in press the news came that E.P. Morris had returned from Ottawa having failed to negotiate a cost-shared railway completion (then estimated at \$700,000), or the assumption of Newfoundland's accumulated debt. Joining Canada was once again not an option. In 1899, the *Twillingate Sun* still referred to Newfoundland as a "pauper dependency" that might yet be thrust into the Canadian fold.

The evolution of the Newfoundland press from official subservience in the first decade of the century, to the social, commercial, and political character that typified most newspapers everywhere, was a gradual process to the 1860s. The question of Confederation however, would not again, in the nineteenth century, rise to the level it had reached when it first became a Canadian national issue and Newfoundland set itself apart. Editors who had always been politically active were particularly interested in the issue as it created a brisk exchange of views with newspapers in neighbouring colonies as well as in Quebec and Toronto, and in England and America. This is of

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<sup>132</sup>Only one copy of the first issue of *The Anti-Confederate* (20 May 1895) is extant. My thanks to Jean Murray of St. John's for access to this private collection. It is not known if the newspaper continued to publish.

particular interest in a history of the press in Newfoundland because it was the first major political debate that considered Newfoundland's place in a British North American context. It was also the first time that St. John's publishers seriously considered an outport market.

Without better knowledge of circulation and readership it is hardly possible to calculate the newspapers' influence throughout Newfoundland society. Clearly the *Comet* had little influence; nor did Bennett or Shea trust the printed word to carry their messages; they counted on their personal appearance at "monster meetings." The newspaper debate served the political elite concentrated in the urban Avalon, separate from the outports, a significant characteristic that has endured.

## Chapter Seven: New Technologies and the Newfoundland Press to 1880

## 7.1

## Introduction

Concepts of 'industrialized consciousness'<sup>1</sup> and 'progress' which characterized Victorian thought in the "age of change" were evident in Newfoundland as elsewhere. The effect of new technologies on space, time, and distance was understood as socially healthy, commercially progressive, and politically positive. The steamship, telegraph, and railroad, along with the steam-powered printing press, revolutionized communication of the printed word simultaneously with transportation. The circulation of people, ideas, and merchandise demanded the circulation of daily information. Weekly newspapers were not replaced, but the promise of the new scientific and mechanical inventions made daily newspapers part of the evolutionary process. These changes were not slow to arrive in Newfoundland, but they were slow to develop. The new technologies, including the newspaper press, had the potential to integrate the widely dispersed and often isolated population but failed to do so on a large scale in the nineteenth century.

This chapter outlines technological developments and examines the response of newspaper proprietors and editors to mechanization and telegraphy in the last half of

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<sup>1</sup>The term, "industrialized consciousness" was used by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in his studies of the railway to explain how railway travel in the nineteenth century created a new perception of time and space. See, e.g., Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986).

the nineteenth century. It notes social changes and discusses to what, if any extent, new technology broadened the newspaper field, or established a new market. Particular attention is paid to the early involvement of the newspaper press with telegraphic news, and will show that while attempts to institute a daily press coincided with telegraph activity, they fell short of predictions. This chapter primarily sets the scene for further discussion in the next chapter of the development of a daily press in St. John's and a new outport press from the 1880s to the end of the century.

## 7.2

### Technological Change

Developments in three separate fields led to the almost simultaneous functioning of steam-driven machinery, vessels, railway locomotives, and electric telegraphy in the 1830s in Europe and America. This trio of new technologies was hailed with breathless awe, and seen as marvels in changing forever the way the world worked.<sup>2</sup>

Advances in underwater telegraphy by mid-century brought the island of

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<sup>2</sup>The original British designs for steam locomotives were modified and improved to the standard adopted in 1833 at Manchester and Liverpool. The British side-wheel steamer *Great Western* opened regular transatlantic service in 1838. Samuel F.B. Morse demonstrated his electromagnet telegraph for the American Congress in 1838, and built the first telegraph line in 1844 between Baltimore and Washington. The first successful application of steam power to the printing press by Koenig & Bauer occurred in London in 1812, but underwent continual experimentation to the 1820s and was in limited general use in the 1830s and 1840s in British North America.



Newfoundland to the attention of American capitalists.<sup>3</sup> Newfoundland's strategic position in the North Atlantic, midway between Europe and America, provided the connecting link for telegraphic communication "between the old world and the new." The phrase was accurate, if well-worn by effusive literary writers, as well as by the more practical and prosaic, in their description of events. Between 1854 and 1866 several failed attempts ended in successful permanent submarine telegraph cable communication between America and Europe. Newfoundland's important role in the achievement of submarine telegraphy cannot be overstated; the island was described fairly as a centre of world communication. Local newspaper editors were hardly less ecstatic in their commentary than were their counterparts in New York or London.

Of the three technologies, steam power had the earliest and more immediate impact in the form of ocean-going and coastal vessels. In Newfoundland, the first mail steam packet began operating between St. John's and Halifax in 1844; the first steamer to operate in Conception Bay in 1852; and to the north and south in 1862. Direct steam transportation from Ireland to St. John's began in 1856 and from St. John's to England in 1873. Detailed information about press equipment is difficult to find, but it

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<sup>3</sup>For discussions of Newfoundland's role in transatlantic telegraph communication see Henry M. Field, D.D., *History of the Atlantic Telegraph* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1866); D.W. Prowse, *A History*, 634-646; G.N. Horvath, "Newfoundland's Communications Pioneer Giant: Frederick N. Gisborne," *Book of Newfoundland*, vol. 5, ed. Joseph Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers 1967 Ltd.1975) 522-534; Michael McGrath, Frank Galgay, and Jack O'Keefe, *The Voice of Generations: a history of communications in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Robinson-Blackmore, 1994); D. R. Tarrant, *Atlantic Sentinel: Newfoundland's Role in Transatlantic Cable Communications* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 1999).

is clear that steam-powered printing presses were in use in Newfoundland only toward the end of the century.

By 1852, a system of electric telegraph land lines connected St. John's and Carbonear along the existing road on the Avalon Peninsula. That telegraph line was frequently vandalized and out of use. The line was extended across the island to Cape Race on the southeast coast and southwest to Cape Ray, near Port aux Basques, in 1856, but it, too, was plagued by vandalism as well as turbulent weather. A submarine cable was laid across the Cabot Strait from Cape Ray to Cape North on Cape Breton Island in 1856, the first connection of Newfoundland to the mainland by telegraph. It underwent repairs until 1866, at which time the entire system was reconstructed. Between 1866 and 1877, Trinity, Catalina, and Bonavista were connected by telegraph. In 1878, connections were completed between St. George's and Bay of Islands on the west coast, and between Betts Cove, Tilt Cove, and Little Bay Mines in Notre Dame Bay. In 1885, lines were extended to Greenspond and Twillingate, and between Burin, St. Lawrence, Lamaline, Grand Bank and Fortune; in 1887 between Fogo, Seldom Come By, and Change Islands.<sup>4</sup>

Construction of a railway began in 1881 and was completed across the island between St. John's and Port aux Basques in 1897. The first rail connection, completed in 1884, was a branch line from St. John's to Harbour Grace, a short distance of 84 miles, it served an area where the bulk of trade operated, and the greatest

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<sup>4</sup>See Prowse, *A History*, 639.

concentration of people lived. A second branch line to Placentia on the south coast was in operation in 1888. The long-term project was fraught with business, financial, and legal problems in its early stages, and continued to be the object of political and public debate through its construction. The main purpose of the railway in Newfoundland was to diversify, and open up the interior of the island for agricultural, mineral, and forest development to meet the demands of an increasing population dependent on the single staple fishery.<sup>5</sup>

### 7.3

### Social Change

The combined influence of these technologies contributed to the social changes already occurring over time. Although the government expended more money on industrial improvements than on education, literacy improved as more schools were built. An intelligentsia had developed and greater demands were made for higher learning and classical education, but only in St. John's and Conception Bay.<sup>6</sup> The habit of reading, it is fair to say, remained largely within an elite minority of the population. While private tutor "schools" gave way to government/church-sponsored academies on

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<sup>5</sup>See James Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics in Newfoundland 1870-1901," *Newfoundland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Essays in Interpretation*, 123-147. James Hiller, "A History of Newfoundland 1874-1901," (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>6</sup>See Phillip McCann, "Sir John Harvey, J.V. Nugent and the School Inspectorship Controversy in the 1840s"; Ruby Gough, "Robert Edwards Holloway: Science and Science Education in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1874-1904," *Newfoundland Studies*, 11: 2, 1995, 199-222; 223-249 respectively.

the Avalon Peninsula, the majority of children voluntarily attended ill-equipped, one-room schools, taught by poorly paid recruits well into the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

Religion remained central to the way of life on the island, but was a less divisive public issue in a more mature society. Major political issues helped create a national spirit and pride of country in a people engaged in building a future in the latter half of the century. The railway, the telegraph monopoly, control over the fishery, trade relations with the United States, and the on-going dispute about French occupation of part of the coastline, were all-engrossing, regardless of sectarian differences.

Road building to accommodate the telegraph and the railway employed men who left the fishery temporarily for cash wages that gave families a small measure of independence. Such roads also allowed for greater mobility and less isolation for the general population. But the outports remained socially separate from the major commercial towns on the Avalon Peninsula, creating a cultural dichotomy that continues, if to a lesser extent, to the present. Civic, or municipal government was established only at St. John's in the nineteenth century. Controversial political debate over providing basic services of water, sewer, street lighting, and fire protection lasted from the 1830s until the 1880s. In 1888 the colonial legislature relinquished some of its control over the functioning of the capital city in passing the St. John's Municipal

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<sup>7</sup>See Phillip McCann, "The Politics of Denominational Education in the Nineteenth Century in Newfoundland," and "Denominational Education in Twentieth Century Newfoundland," *The Vexed Question*, 30-60 and 60-80 respectively.

Act, clear evidence of modernizing change, but one that was not fully achieved until the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

#### 7.4

#### Impact on the Press

Taken together, such technological and social changes might be expected to have had an immediate and dramatic impact on the local newspaper press. Certainly, the press chronicled the changes, served as the public forum of political debate on all of the issues, and editorially supported or opposed a myriad of ideas, but essentially it experienced little change. Until the 1880s, the newspaper market was much the same as it had always been. The greatest circulation remained within the publishing centres of St. John's and Conception Bay, though some filtration occurred in a few outlying areas serviced by mail boats. The market remained much the same also because the bulk of the population continued to reside on the Avalon Peninsula, while the outport population remained dispersed throughout numerous small communities. It was in the urban centre of government and commercial activity that publishers and editors could best survive financially, and satisfy their personal political ambitions. Here, they were not only close to the power base, but an integral part of it.

Until the 1880s, almost all of the original newspaper families were still in the business, though ready to retire, with no intention or reason to do things differently.

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<sup>8</sup>See Melvin Baker, "The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland 1800-1921," 387-391.

The effort and expense of trying to develop a habit of reading newspapers in small distant settlements where literacy was not advanced, most likely did not make sense economically or politically. This rationale applies also for newcomers in the newspaper business if only because it took a long time for the new technologies to be perfected over a large expanse of mostly unpopulated wilderness. Moreover, the telegraph system was placed in private company hands from the beginning and granted a 50-year charter/monopoly by the Newfoundland government in 1854. The railway was also later controlled by private interests, and the costs of using these systems, especially the telegraph, were high. News by telegraph was an exciting possibility that coaxed some editors to think of "going daily." But news by way of the telegraph was not easily acquired, partly because of the expense involved, but also because it required cooperation among a group of individualist journalists who had seldom agreed on anything. Logically, changes brought by telegraph and rail to the speed, volume, content variety, circulation, and distribution occurred first, and with the greatest impact in the largest newspaper markets of the world's major cities and commercial centres, where faster printing presses were also already in operation.<sup>9</sup>

Drawing on McLuhan, Nick Stevenson reiterated that the telegraph made possible intimate social relations across time and space; that it provided the continuous

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<sup>9</sup>It was the high cost of collecting news by telegraph that brought together six reluctant highly competitive newspaper publishers in New York in 1848 to form the joint venture, Associated Press, in order to keep control of news-gathering away from the telegraph companies.

presence and accessibility of person-to-person communication.<sup>10</sup> But he also recognized that such democratizing technologies "cannot guarantee informed levels of debate."<sup>11</sup> David Paul Nord has noted that despite the "futuristic claims" made for the revolutionizing telegraph in the 1840s, it was not until after the Civil War that telegraph news became a significant component of American newspaper content. Even then, what appeared to be telegraph news in the smaller newspapers was still clipped from larger papers and re-published.<sup>12</sup>

Within the island of Newfoundland, telegraphy, the railway, and steam power were only slowly and gradually adopted, and were important mainly to the development of import/export trade and commerce. For the local newspaper trade it meant the arrival of more timely British, American, and Canadian news; a faster exchange of news within the local market of St. John's and Conception Bay; and perhaps an increase in distribution to settlements on the north and south runs of the

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<sup>10</sup>Nick Stevenson, *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communications* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995), 127; Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 1994), 256.

<sup>11</sup>Stevenson, *Understanding Media Cultures*, 133.

<sup>12</sup>David Paul Nord, "The Ironies of Communication Technology: Why Predictions of the Future So Often Go Wrong", *The Cresset*, 49, (March, 1986) 17. It has been noted that the American Civil War caused military takeover of the Washington office of the American Telegraph Company (ATC), and at the beginning of 1862, telegraph communication throughout the north was screened by the military before proceeding to newsrooms. See R.A. Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers*, vol.1 (Evanston, Ill.:Northwestern University Press, 1989), 241.

mail steamer.<sup>13</sup> Technological advancement, intrinsically valuable in terms of construction work and opening up the interior of the island, did little to change the newspaper press, which from the 1840s onward, was described elsewhere as democratic mass media, the essence of modernity. Modernity, however, came slowly to Newfoundland.

### 7.5 Steam Navigation and Roads

In the absence of a road system, with settlement almost entirely along the coast, ocean-going vessels were the most important means of transportation and communication within Newfoundland, as well as between the Island and the rest of North America and Europe, throughout the nineteenth century. According to the editor of the Halifax *Novascotian* in 1840, that colony was eager to establish permanent steam communication with Newfoundland, if only to increase the trade in cattle that faster vessels ensured.<sup>14</sup>

The creation of a road system in addition to, or in combination with steam navigation, was initially considered more important and more practical than building a railway. These matters were discussed in the newspapers, steeped in partisan rhetoric with little action being taken. In 1844, for example, the *Morning Courier*, then a tri-weekly, under the direction of William Beck and Stephen Daniel, proposed the

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<sup>13</sup>No records exist for the number of newspapers subscribed or distributed.

<sup>14</sup>*Star and Conception Bay Journal*, 15 January 1840.



creation of an extensive road system to open up the country for agricultural settlement and exploiting mineral resources. Despite the promise in its prospectus to "veer from the path of... political frenzy,"<sup>15</sup> in its third issue, the editor called on the legislature to vote money for road-building, but warned that the grant would be made only on the strength of petitions from the outposts:

... we would impress upon them, immediately to set about preparing petitions and getting them numerous signed in order that they may be forwarded to the Capital before navigation closes. We shall again revert to this subject.<sup>16</sup>

In its fourth issue a more urgent call for petitions was made:

... *that which is not worth asking for, is not worth giving*... roads are to a country what the arteries are to the human frame, they convey life and animation throughout the system. In the absence of roads... agriculture can never be fully developed.<sup>17</sup>

The editorial went on to discuss the various scientific methods and materials used in building roads, detailing the disadvantages of a perfectly level surface compared to an undulating grade better suited to the gait of trotting horses. Such specific details about road-building suggests the influence of C.F. Bennett, to whom the issue was so important, and who also had the support of the *Courier* at this time. For example, the road being built in the fall of 1844 between Placentia and Colliers was touted as a boon to future development. It would mean timberland opened up for shipbuilding and

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<sup>15</sup>*Morning Courier*, 21 October 1844.

<sup>16</sup>*Morning Courier*, 28 October 1844.

<sup>17</sup>*Morning Courier*, 30 October 1844.

agriculture. It was, the *Courier* editor said, "only justice" to C.F. Bennett who had "so perseveringly contended for the means of opening up this... line of road."<sup>18</sup> Yet over the next two decades the extent of road building outside of St. John's, at a reported cost of almost £10,000 per year, was not more than 100 miles.<sup>19</sup>

Steam navigation remained a priority in Newfoundland, and was heavily promoted in the *Courier* even after it changed hands in 1846. Seaton, the new editor, presented strong arguments about development, and was not reticent in his criticism of what he saw as a lack of local initiative among political and business leaders in Newfoundland. He suggested that local merchants should have fought for the Cunard Line contract that went instead to the Whitney company of Halifax, which gave Halifax a weekly mail service from Liverpool and Boston, a result of the extension of the Nova Scotia railroad to the head of Bay of Fundy where it divided in two branches -- one going westward through Canada, and one going south to the United States.

Newfoundland continued to be decidedly disadvantaged with mails only 20 weeks out of the year. A steam navigation stock company, Seaton argued, could have been secured for £30,000, half shared by Halifax merchants with further subscription shares as low as £10 each.<sup>20</sup> Seaton kept up editorial pressure for the establishment of

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<sup>18</sup>*Morning Courier*, 22 November 1844. C.F. Bennett was conspicuously favoured in the *Courier* for years, although no concrete evidence supports his possible financial involvement with that newspaper.

<sup>19</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 14 March 1860.

<sup>20</sup>*Courier*, 8 May 1847.

a "Steam Navigation Company" capitalizing the name as if it were already in existence and calculating distances, freight charges, and vessel draught, to the projected costs and revenues of such a venture.<sup>21</sup> William J. Ward of the *Morning Post* suggested other schemes, scoffed at as "utopian," such as an agricultural project on Bell Island with a steamer transporting thousands of tons of produce either to Topsail or to Portugal Cove, and linked to St. John's by railroad.<sup>22</sup> However, any suggestions for a combination of steam and rail to enhance trade and development still made no mention of increasing newspaper circulation or distribution, presumably because a ready market was not anticipated outside the "metropolis."

In his study of Canadian newspapers, Rutherford noted that out of the many newspapers produced in the larger centres, even in the last half of the nineteenth century, only the powerful Toronto *Globe* developed a readership that reached into the "provincial hinterland,"<sup>23</sup> a process that took more than 20 years, and which Rutherford considered "early". In 1876, "spending ahead of demand," George Brown used morning trains to take his newspapers to Hamilton and London. But the expenditure yielded small reward.<sup>24</sup> J.M.S. Careless argued that Brown's interest in the agrarian hinterland was motivated not by an impulse to lift the masses out of their ignorance,

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<sup>21</sup>*Courier*, 19 June; 23 June 1847.

<sup>22</sup>*Courier*, 19 June 1847.

<sup>23</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 56-58.

<sup>24</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 56-58.

but rather a desire for a Toronto-dominated commercial expansion in Upper Canada in collaboration with wealthy rural property-owners, not simple farmers.<sup>25</sup> To make some comparison for Newfoundland, a "propertied class" outside of the urban centre was small, and fishing families had little time, or interest for newspapers.<sup>26</sup> In St. John's, however, anticipation of the new technologies was high.

## 7.6

## New Expectations

*It is universally affirmed that the proposed Telegraph enterprise will mark a vast stride of general commercial and social progress. And, when we contemplate its results -- immediate and prospective, upon the fortunes of Newfoundland -- abundance of remunerative employment to our suffering population ... it seems impossible to overestimate its moment to the interests of this country.*

~ *Newfoundlander*, 3 April 1854

Most, if not all local editors shared the enthusiasm of the Sheas in welcoming telegraphy. Predictions that Europe and North America would be in telegraphic communication by the summer of 1857<sup>27</sup> were greeted similarly, but only J.T. Burton

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<sup>25</sup>J.M.S. Careless, "The Toronto *Globe* and Agrarian Radicalism 1850-67," *Careless at Work: Selected Canadian Historical Studies* by James Careless (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 17-45; 39-42.

<sup>26</sup>For a detailed discussion of relationships in the fishing society of Newfoundland see Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay*.

<sup>27</sup>The first practicable telegraph was in operation by Samuel F.B. Morse in January 1836 in New York. Inter City line connections came to form the Western Union Telegraphy Company in 1856. See E. Douglas Branch *The Sentimental Years 1836-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), 12-13; see also F.L. Mott, *American Journalism A History: 1690-1960*, third edition (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 251-252.

had been spurred to launch a new weekly newspaper the previous year with the propitious title, *Telegraph and Political Review*. He believed that the cable connecting Newfoundland to Europe and the American continent was "but the precursor of many benefits ... hopefully looking forward to the good time coming for this colony so long retarded in the march to civilization."<sup>28</sup> With great relish he published the first telegraph message sent over the lines of the New York, Newfoundland and London Telegraph Company (re-named the Anglo-American Telegraph Company in the 1870s). Sent to St. John's via the first Cabot Strait cable, it read: "Baddeck, Oct. 7, 1856. 240 p.m. To William Pitts, Has *Emily Corbett* arrived - is cargo sold - when to leave. Answer immediately. 10 p.m."<sup>29</sup>

Burton could not trust himself to express his feelings on the magnitude of this event for fear he would be "thought insane." The banner at the top of his editorial set in heavy black type, GLORIOUS NEWS!! THE TELEGRAPH IN OPERATION forecast his warm praise for F.N. Gisborne, who had initiated the installation of a cable connection through the Cabot Strait, and construction of a telegraph line across the island, having surveyed the route between 1850 and 1852.<sup>30</sup> His "noble company"

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<sup>28</sup>*Telegraph*, 17 September 1856.

<sup>29</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 8 October 1856.

<sup>30</sup>Frederick Newton Gisborne was born in England in 1824. Trained in civil engineering, he went to Quebec in 1845 where he became chief operator of the Montreal Telegraph Company. He formed the British North America Electric Telegraph Association in 1847 to connect the Maritime provinces with Upper and Lower Canada. In 1856, after completion of the land line across Newfoundland he was

had achieved the enterprise, "surmounting all obstacles." In reference to Cunard's "powerful steamers" going between Halifax and Liverpool, Burton pressed the case for Newfoundland:

We need not tell such practical men as those comprising the Telegraph Company that if we are not placed nearer Great Britain in time than Halifax now is, by means of powerful steamers, the Telegraph hence to New York will never pay.<sup>31</sup>

In 1857, Burton was the first to suggest cooperative news-gathering on a wide scale. He raised the possibility of forming "an associated press of this colony on a plan somewhat similar to the [American] Associated Press." It would place local readers on an equal footing with the reading public of New York, "seeing that the *latest* European news must pass *through* NF to the American Continent."

It is perhaps needless to observe that with our limited means, when if with the monster journals of Boston and New York, with their thousands of subscribers and pages of well-paid-for advertisements, that it would be impossible for us to compete with them either in length or in frequency of our telegraph dispatches. Still something might be done. Individually it is mortally certain we can do nothing. We might be occasionally favoured by a friend (as some of our contemporaries have been in one or two instances) with a copy of a telegraph message, but that is not enough. We submit the matter to our brethren of the *fourth estate* for their consideration ... One thing is certain ... it is a duty we

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instrumental in extending a cable to Cape Breton. Gisborne was also involved in mineral exploration in Newfoundland and represented the colony at the great exhibition in London in 1862, and at Paris in 1865. See L. E. Jones, P.Eng., "Delineations of destiny: Frederick Newton Gisborne (1824-1892)" *Engineering Digest*, XIII, December 1967, 37-38.

<sup>31</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 8 October 1856.

owe to the public that we should make some effort of the kind.<sup>32</sup>

Local journalistic brethren did not respond, doubtless because they were aware of the costs. In New York, each member newspaper in a press association paid \$14,000 per year for news delivered by telegraph service. Together with other cable expenses, one New York metropolitan newspaper paid as much as \$70,000 annually to the Western Union telegraph company.<sup>33</sup> Without a sustaining circulation of what were essentially editorial opinion sheets in small markets, publishers could not take advantage of the new technologies, since they could not afford it.<sup>34</sup> Burton did not pursue the idea. Instead he concentrated on what he called the "greatest event of the age" -- the laying of the Atlantic Cable (Valentia, Ireland to Heart's Content) -- that would "form a *bond*

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<sup>32</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 5 August 1857.

<sup>33</sup>Mark Wahlgren Smith, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics 1865-68* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 12. Smith also credited the new technologies from the 1840s forward, particularly railroads and improved printing machinery, for increasing circulation and distribution in the United States.

<sup>34</sup>The magnetic telegraph was in use between New York and Philadelphia in 1846, newspapers being among the first customers. But according to one study, business was not brisk. Costs at mid-century were considered high at 25 cents for 10 words or fewer sent less than 100 miles. See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution 1815-1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 152. The use of press telegrams doubled in Britain between 1879 and 1899, so that a small provincial newspaper might obtain an adequate supply of telegraphed news for about £10 a year. At the extreme, the London *Times* spent about £40,000 a year in the 1870s on foreign news service. These monies went to telegraph companies, which, Brown argued, were the chief beneficiaries [of the technology] at that time. See Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1985), 13-15; 227-233.

of peace between the old world and the new." Annoyed that "no collective plan" was in place to at least celebrate the great event, he despaired of the lack of interest:

It truly would be an unenviable notoriety to obtain that we of all the civilized world should be the only people who *appeared* not to take an interest since being in our isolated position ... we have not acquired the habit of acting in a body, as in other communities.<sup>35</sup>

In the summer of 1858, without prior announcement or fanfare, William J. Ward of the *Morning Post and Shipping Gazette* was named as the telegraphic news agent for the New York Associated Press, the only publisher in Newfoundland directly involved with the new system. More a literary journalist, he had avoided political debate for the previous two decades, preferring instead a more genteel style with generous helpings of original poetry.<sup>36</sup> But he was entrepreneurial,<sup>37</sup> which made him a suitable choice for a telegraphic news agent. He may also have made the connection

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<sup>35</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 12 August 1857.

<sup>36</sup>His own poems graced the pages of the *Morning Post and Shipping Gazette* in the early issues. Poems by Anna Marie Ward, his third wife, were a regular feature in the 1860s. Ward was married first in 1844, to Emily Thorne Nuttall of Harbour Grace, who appears to have died in childbirth in 1845; and in 1847 to Amelia Mary Louisa Salter of Dartmouth, granddaughter of John Ryan, editor of the *Royal Gazette*, then deceased. See Crosbie, *Births, Deaths, and Marriages*, vol. 1. The notice of his marriage to A.M. Webster Ward of New Hampshire appeared in the *Telegraph and Political Review*, 20 June 1860.

<sup>37</sup>Ward's name appeared in several local newspapers as notary public; agent for the Bank of London, the Bank of British North America, and the National Provincial Insurance Association. He also published the *Commercial Journal, Prices Current & Shipping List of Newfoundland*, a single sheet devoted exclusively to wholesale and export prices concurrent with the arrival of every mail packet. Only one issue is extant, but the same title by different proprietors is listed to 1892 according to Ellison, *Directory*, 28.



with Gisborne, or through relatives in Nova Scotia, where he was earlier involved in the newspaper business<sup>38</sup> and where cooperative news-gathering was already established by Daniel H. Craig, general agent for Associated Press.

In June, news came that the transatlantic cable steamers *Niagara* and *Agamemnon* were expected to arrive in Trinity Bay for testing the payout system.<sup>39</sup> The local newspapers buzzed with interest, but Burton wanted a "public demonstration" to welcome the vessels. "Are we to receive the [cable-laying] vessels as we would so many salt vessels?" he asked.

It will be said of Newfoundland that her people are so wrapt [sic] up in their own affairs that they have no time to spare for their neighbours, or that they are blind now to that which will eventually influence the whole world; and this at a time when the subject is forced upon them by the passage of the electric current through the Island to the most western part of North America.<sup>40</sup>

Because Burton's paper published on Wednesdays, he missed the big news of the completion of the submarine cable which occurred Thursday, 5 August 1858. His subsequent editorial made much of the previous week's direct reports: "On last Thursday morning about 10 o'clock the words, 'The Cable is laid,' passed from mouth to mouth like wildfire." Burton reported enthusiastically that public buildings had been illuminated at night and a Ball was to have taken place the previous night [Tuesday]

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<sup>38</sup>Ward claimed to have been the first to publish daily in Halifax in 1843. His father, Edmund Ward, was publisher of the *Halifax Free Press* from 1816 to 1834.

<sup>39</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 9 June 1858.

<sup>40</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 23 June 1858.

and a regatta was to take place that day [Wednesday]. Burton also noted that the first words transmitted 14 years previously over the first line of electric telegraph ever established were: "See What God Hath Wrought."<sup>41</sup> Though few editors were as unrestrained as Burton, in the days to follow newspapers were filled with cards of congratulations and responses, including Queen Victoria's message to the President of the United States, which most local papers carried:

... the Electric Cable which now connects Great Britain and the US will prove an additional link between the two Nations whose friendship is founded upon their common interest and reciprocal esteem.<sup>42</sup>

The following week the newspapers had returned to more familiar concerns about the poor quality of harvesting, curing, and packing herring, which, reports warned, rendered the product "almost valueless in foreign markets." A Chamber of Commerce report concentrated on direct steam communication between Great Britain and Newfoundland and between the United States and Newfoundland.

By the fall of 1858, defects in the Atlantic cable were reported, and could not be repaired for months.<sup>43</sup> Although it failed at this time, and would not be finally completed for several years, Newfoundland was part of a transatlantic news system that captured the imagination of Daniel H. Craig, and his employer, the New York

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<sup>41</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 11 August 1858. Burton's reference was to the first message sent in 1844 by Samuel F.B. Morse over the first experimental electric telegraph line constructed between Baltimore and Washington.

<sup>42</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 11 August 1858.

<sup>43</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 13 October 1858.

Associated Press.<sup>44</sup> Even before the transatlantic cable connecting the two hemispheres was fully functional in 1866, a plan was executed to intercept steamers on their way from Europe to America as they passed Cape Race, Newfoundland to obtain the latest news and telegraph it from there over the line to Cape Ray and across the Cabot Strait system to New York in advance of the steamers' arrival.

## 7.7

### News Via Cape Race

Before wider use of the telegraph,<sup>45</sup> Craig had devised a carrier pigeon system for delivering commercial and other news between Halifax, Nova Scotia and Washington, D.C., and Boston.<sup>46</sup> When the telegraph reached Boston, the line was extended as far as Calais, Maine, and subsequently to Saint John, New Brunswick. Craig then dispensed with carrier pigeons and started a pony express running between

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<sup>44</sup>Craig was said to have shares in the New York, Newfoundland & London Electric Telegraph Company, though his vote was by proxy. See Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers*, vol I, 195.

<sup>45</sup>In less than a decade following Samuel Morse's 1844 success, the United States had a total of 24,000 kilometres of telegraph lines and American railroads were entirely managed by telegraph. See Tom F. Peters, *Building the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 14. By comparison, the habit of using the telegraph was not firmly established by newspapers in Britain until the 1870s during the Franco-Prussian War. See Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, 227.

<sup>46</sup>For a discussion of Craig's career as a news agent see Victor Rosewater, *History of Cooperative News-Gathering in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton, 1930), 30-33. See also the more recent Schwarzlose work (1989) which builds on Rosewater's narrative.

Halifax and Digby, and across the Bay of Fundy by steamer to Saint John.

Commissioned by New York publishers to procure European news,<sup>47</sup> Craig acted on the idea to intercept steamers off Cape Race. Writing in 1930, Rosewater cited a contemporaneous description of the "exhilarating sport" under Craig's direction:

The steamers crossing from England or Ireland make for Cape Race and, when they approach the cape, they run up a signal or fire a gun to attract attention. The newsmen are on the alert and start off with the yacht to the large steamer. A tin canister, or box made water-tight, and to which a flag is fixed which can be seen at a distance when in the water, is thrown overboard, and this contains the latest news made up at Liverpool or Galway. The yachtsmen make for the small flag, pick up the box, and make all speed to St. John's, Newfoundland, from which place the news is immediately telegraphed to all parts of Canada and to the United States, a distance of more than a thousand miles. The news is carried across a country, a great part of which is little more than a savage wilderness, over lofty hills, deep swamps and almost impenetrable woods. It passes by submarine telegraph from Newfoundland to the American continent, over a portion of the lines to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and thence to Portland, Maine, where the American system of telegraphs commences. The news from Europe thus precedes the arrival of the steamer by several days.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Navigation of the Columbia River by the Hudson's Bay Company was a matter of dispute between US and Britain 1845-46. It is suggested in the literature this may have been the reason for 16 US newspapers to combine resources to obtain the earliest possible news from England by hiring a vessel to cross the Atlantic and connect with expresses (pony) at Halifax and Boston. The cost to the newspapers was \$5,000 for the boat, \$4,000 for the Halifax express, and \$1,000 for the Boston express. New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore papers cooperated in the venture. It was said the ponies from Halifax "fairly flew" to Portland in relays. From Boston to New York the news was taken by locomotive. The distance of 1000 miles was covered in 50 hours. These newspapers were called "The Holy Alliance." See Rosewater, *History of Newsgathering*, 29.

<sup>48</sup>Rosewater, *History of Newsgathering*, 33, citing E. McDermott, "Reporting by Telegraph," *Once A Week*, September, 1860, 260. [The precise citation should read, "Telegraph Reporting in Canada and the United States," *Once a Week*, (London:

The reference to St. John's may be incorrect, as the telegraph station at Cape Race was intended for the purpose.<sup>49</sup> A similar account appears in Schwarzlose:

The Associated Press has an agent at Liverpool who, upon the departure of each steamer ... places in the hands of the purser a tin cylindrical can, containing the latest news prepared for transmission by telegraph. These cans are thrown overboard on the appearance of the news boats stationed off [New York, Halifax, St. John's, Quebec, or Portland] ... [S]teamers are frequently overhauled off Cape Race by the steamer Victoria, employed by the associated press. If at night, rockets are fired by the steamers, and the news dispatches, enclosed in a keg, are thrown over, so that the Victoria can pick them up ....<sup>50</sup>

Such a method of intercepting news despatches from Atlantic steamers near Cape Race was also described in similar detail in Burton's newspaper in the spring of 1858 in a letter to the editor from "O.S." of Cape Breton. Commenting on the letter, Burton said:

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Bradbury & Evans, 11 Bouverie Street, 1 September 1860) 258-260.] I am grateful to Brad Bullis, Reference Librarian, New Haven Free Public Library, New Haven, Ct. for this information. Prowse stated that the Associated Press stationed a news boat at Cape Race as early as 1859. See Prowse, *A History*, 641, n2. Gramling's house history of the Associated Press makes no reference to Newfoundland or to Cape Race. See Oliver Gramling, *AP: The Story of News* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1940).

<sup>49</sup>Unfortunately, sources examined do not describe the operation in precise detail. A depiction of the scene at Cape Race by engraver Mason Jackson was printed in the *Illustrated London News*, 24 August 1861. The scene includes a small dory (not a yacht or packet boat as described elsewhere) with four men inside riding heavy waves and approaching a large steamer. See also Charles P. DeVolpi, *Newfoundland A Pictorial Record, Historical Prints and Illustrations of the Province of Newfoundland 1497-1887* (Toronto: Longman Canada Limited, 1972), 98.

<sup>50</sup>Beman Brockway, *Fifty Years in Journalism embracing Recollections and Personal Experiences, with an Autobiography* (Watertown, NY: *Daily Times* 1891), 240, cited in Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers*, 200.

Of course the editor of the [New York] *Albion* and the rest of the "corps editorial of New York," is interested in the fate of said 'press dispatches' intended to be picked up by the vessel employed to watch for the mail steamers, as they pass Cape Race on their arrival from Europe. The news by the despatches is then to be flashed by electric telegraph from Newfoundland to New York.<sup>51</sup>

Information about the "newsboat" is sketchy at best; it is not known with any certainty if there was more than one, or how many times it retrieved news and delivered it to the telegraph station for transmission.

At the beginning of 1859, Ward had inexplicably dropped back publishing the *Morning Post* to bi-weekly from tri-weekly. He was then a member of the Telegraphic News Agency and the Agency of the European and American Telegraphic Association. He complained, however, that rival editors were in the habit of "appropriating information" for which the *Post* had "paid a fee."<sup>52</sup> He condemned the [theft] of telegraph news, the cost of which included having a vessel stationed off Cape Race to "intercept steamers coming from Europe" to retrieve the news.<sup>53</sup> He was undoubtedly referring to the New York newsbrokers who paid the cost of a newsboat at Cape Race. Nevertheless, as middleman, Ward offered to relay messages received by steamer reaching St. John's to any part of the United States or British North America, (from the St. John's telegraph office) promising arrival at their destination "in *advance*

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<sup>51</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 24 March 1858.

<sup>52</sup>*Morning Post and Shipping Gazette*, 4 January 1859.

<sup>53</sup>If Ward was the contact person in Newfoundland engaged with Daniel Craig, the agent for the New York papers, no evidence was found to verify it.

of the mail." Claiming to be connected with agencies in Boston, Halifax, Saint John, Quebec City, Montreal, Portland, Cadiz, and Lisbon, the *Post* also promised:

PRICES of Cotton, Corn, Sugars, FISH OIL, or any other article in the European and American market will be accurately obtained to the latest *moment possible*, and promptly transmitted to parties ordering such information.<sup>54</sup>

Most telegraphic news was published as headline news, in very small type, often in one paragraph slightly more than two column inches, each sentence providing unrelated information and little detail from various countries such as England, France, Italy, or China.<sup>55</sup> Having presented himself as "proprietor" of the Telegraphic and General News Agency in St. John's in the spring of 1860, it was presumably on that basis that Ward began daily publication of the *Post* that summer.<sup>56</sup> As the only local newspaper connected with the Cape Race rendezvous, the first issue of the daily *Post* was distributed free, with 500 extra copies for non-subscribers. Subsequent editions were sold to non-subscribers for two pence a copy. Ward wanted to sell his newspaper in the street and publish the names of his vendors, but found no one for the job.<sup>57</sup> A second advertisement appealed for a "steady and intelligent lad or man" to sell the

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<sup>54</sup>*Morning Post and Shipping Gazette*, 4 January 1859.

<sup>55</sup>See, e.g., *Telegraph and Political Review*, 14 March 1860.

<sup>56</sup>*Morning Post and Shipping Gazette*, 9 August 1860.

<sup>57</sup>It is not clear that newspaper street-vending was an uncommon practice, although Ward's advertisement suggests it was unfamiliar in the St. John's market. Information about 'newsboys' in nineteenth-century Newfoundland is obscure.

*Post*, an occupation of a "literary character," and "may be considered here as it is elsewhere highly respectable and praiseworthy."<sup>58</sup> The next issue carried serial fiction, romantic tales, accounts of trials, and extracts from the *Paris papers*.<sup>59</sup> Monday's editorial discussed the warm summer weather, the potato crop, the hope for "at least" an average fishery, and the large pothole opposite the residence of the Archdeacon -- "...we feel satisfied the proper authorities will accord us their warmest thanks for calling their attention immediately to the dangerous spot."<sup>60</sup> In this small market, telegraph news would not have demanded daily production.

The seeming lack of interest on the part of other local newspapers<sup>61</sup> is understood by the reality of circumstances at the time. Rosewater noted that purchase of telegraph news was rare, except for the most enterprising journalists, and out of the question for the majority.<sup>62</sup> Apart from market conditions, he also suggested that journalists at mid-century were just beginning to grasp how the technology worked, hardly suspecting the revolution in news-gathering by the end of the century.<sup>63</sup> In

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<sup>58</sup>*Morning Post*, 10 August 1860.

<sup>59</sup>*Morning Post*, 11 August 1860.

<sup>60</sup>*Morning Post*, 13 August, 1860.

<sup>61</sup>Burton was an exception, and although he published several newspapers, he did not express any interest in daily publication.

<sup>62</sup>Rosewater, *History of Cooperative Newsgathering*, 39.

<sup>63</sup>Associated Press Report, 1897, 155, cited in Rosewater, *History of Cooperative Newsgathering*, 39.



Newfoundland, as elsewhere, the telegraph system was soon in private hands, and by late August, 1860, Ward was in difficulty, pretending, "people...can hardly do without [the *Post*]" and urging advertisers to "get in as early as possible," though he feared he would have to "send abroad for a person adapted to the business."<sup>64</sup> Two weeks later he gave up:

A fair trial of the matter has satisfied us that our progressive idea was rather in advance of the requirement of the community, when we thought a Daily paper was a desideratum here, and we have found that the paucity of local incidents adapted to public remark is a material drawback to the successful issue of a paper more frequent than twice a week.<sup>65</sup>

On departing, he made no reference to the status of his affiliation with the telegraph news cooperatives. The *Post* ceased publication a year and a half later on 29 March 1862, because it "seems not suited to the present conditions," where there was a "superabundant supply of papers."<sup>66</sup>

However, a new development in the market offers a more plausible explanation relative to his supplying telegraphic news. In the summer of 1861, the following advertisement had appeared in some of the local newspapers:

European and American Telegraphic News Room

The subscriber, having facilities to obtain latest telegraphic intelligence

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<sup>64</sup>*Morning Post*, 1 September 1860.

<sup>65</sup>*Morning Post*, 16 October, 1860.

<sup>66</sup>It must be noted that W.J. Ward died, aged 56, 5 August 1862. See Crosbie, *Births, deaths, marriages*, vol. 3.

from Europe and America, proposes opening a Telegraphic News Room in connection with the Telegraph Office at this place, provided he can obtain sufficient support. A full summary of Steamers' News, intercepted off Cape Race, will be placed on the table immediately after its transmission to New York. When steamers arrive at this port from Europe, one day's later news can always be found at the Room than is brought by the papers. When no steamer is intercepted, or when no steamer arrives in any week, a despatch will be obtained from Halifax, Quebec, or New York so as to furnish news at least once a week from Europe or America when the Telegraph lines are working. In addition to telegraphic intelligence the latest European and New York papers, by steamers arriving here, will be placed on the table. N.B. No Ship News, except arrival of the Galway Steamer will be given.<sup>67</sup>

The advertisement was signed by A.M. Mackay, native of Nova Scotia, former chief electrician for the Nova Scotia Telegraph Company, and then superintendent for the Atlantic Cable Company in Newfoundland. This raises the question whether Ward was engaged by Mackay to distribute telegraphic news through the *Morning Post*, and failed, or whether he was an upstart who assumed he could operate alone and was forced out of the market by Mackay.

News intercepted at Cape Race was not available to local newspapers until after it was telegraphed to New York or Halifax, and sent back to St. John's.<sup>68</sup> This alone suggests how little local newspaper publishers were involved. With the exception of Ward, and at least one other, Francis Winton, most local editors "borrowed"

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<sup>67</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 3 July 1861.

<sup>68</sup>Moses Harvey also made this point in an article he wrote for *Steward's Quarterly*, reprinted in the British *Blackwood's Magazine*, and published as an extract (no dates) in the *St. John's Times*, 2 August 1873. Harvey referred not to the local newspapers, but to the "singular indignity" suffered by the Newfoundland public in what he considered an unnecessary delay.

telegraph news from their competitors. Some newspapers carried brief items under the head, "Telegraph News," or followed by the caveat, "supplied by Mackay's Telegraph News Room," at least intermittently, to the end of 1861.<sup>69</sup> At the beginning of the new year, however, Mackay had put an end to allowing local journalists to copy the despatches since they reneged on payment. Winton said he did not blame Mackay because the St. John's newspapers had so abused the opportunity:

Now, what are we to do in this case? We have carefully paid our way ... and we are still desirous of obtaining for our readers the latest news ... even at an advanced price ... such conduct is a disgrace to the Press ... it makes us feel contempt for the paltry snickering herd in whose hands the Press has fallen ... the chevaliers-d'-industrie of the profession.<sup>70</sup>

After the Atlantic cable was functioning in 1866, an item circulating in the newspapers stated that the local newspaper trade could obtain European news, depending on the number of subscribers, for about £300 per annum.<sup>71</sup> Winton, then editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, said again he would subscribe at twice the cost for telegraph news, but only with a guarantee that non-subscribers were barred from

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<sup>69</sup>See, e.g., *Telegraph and Political Review*, 4 December 1861.

<sup>70</sup>*Day Book*, 8 January 1862.

<sup>71</sup>See, e.g., *Public Ledger*, 1 January 1867. The *Ledger* later published "Cable News" from London that Cyrus Field would allow political news of both hemispheres to pass at a reduced rate. That particular item of "cable news" was already seven days old when it was printed in the local paper. See *Public Ledger*, 22 March 1867.

printing it.<sup>72</sup>

It is significant that no editorial criticism of Mackay's Telegraphic News Room appeared in any of the local newspapers. Clearly, local publishers, who could not, or would not purchase news by telegraph, were not threatened by this new venture. Moreover, the local press in general treated Mackay with great deference. He had inserted himself into local affairs, socially and politically, was highly regarded,<sup>73</sup> and received the sympathy of local editors when he reported acts of vandalism:

Near Chapel Arm, Trinity Bay on Monday evening last, two boat crews belonging to Conception Bay landed and cut and carried off the Telegraph wire for over half a mile. As not sufficient wire is available to repair, the line must remain down for some time -- meantime business is taken by an operator on the spot and taken backward and forward to each end of the broken wire. At Harbour Main last evening the poles were cut down for nearly half a mile and carried off. I have been compelled to notify our New York agency to send no more European business. [Signed] A.M. Mackay.<sup>74</sup>

Similar destruction was reported on the lines between Lamanche and Brigus, and

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<sup>72</sup>Competition in large Canadian cities was so keen that newspaper publishers cooperated in schemes to protect their collective interests as early as 1859. Postage rates, duties on equipment, and increased prices for paper in the 1890s combined to force even the most "aloof" daily newspaper publishers in Toronto to join a protective association. See Minko Sotiron, "Concentration and Collusion in the Canadian Newspaper Industry 1895-1920," *Journalism History*, 18, 1992, 26.

<sup>73</sup>As Provincial Grand Master Mason, Mackay was the first appointed under Scotland's jurisdiction in Newfoundland. It was said Mackay had the "respect and esteem of all classes of society in Newfoundland." See: extract from the *Courier in the Public Ledger*, 28 May 1868. He was later elected to the House of Assembly representing Burgeo-LaPoile, 1878, 1882, and 1885. See Prowse, *A History*, 665.

<sup>74</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 12 June 1861.

between Brigus and St. John's around the same time. Such incidents were not uncommon and were generally condemned in the local press:

[It is] painful to record such fact. Many thousands of miles of telegraph line in every part of the habitable globe, but in no place have we heard of conduct so reprehensible as that with which our countrymen are charged.<sup>75</sup>

The only editorial criticism, scathing by some for politically partisan reasons, was directed toward the general telegraph monopoly granted the company by the Newfoundland Government. The Chamber of Commerce, or Commercial Society in St. John's showed no interest in expansion of the local newspaper market as a result of the telegraph. Their main concern was in promoting St. John's abroad as the centre from which European news was transmitted to "every important part of the American continent,"<sup>76</sup> and in obtaining cheap telegraph rates for themselves and their trading businesses. The Sheas were among those who complained, though mildly:

The part taken by Newfoundland in the conception of the Telegraph enterprise should have been recognized by the Company in allowing her to have free direct public messages, and a reasonable reduction on the through rates to the States, for private messages to and from this country.<sup>77</sup>

Shea said private messages paid full fare, and commercial messages came "stale from the States and western colonies." Despite the "liberal privileges" given to the

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<sup>75</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 12 June 1861.

<sup>76</sup>*Telegraph and Political Review*, 6 August 1860

<sup>77</sup>*Newfoundlander*, 25 July 1873.

company, Newfoundland was the last to receive any benefits from "the great work." The telegraph company was unsympathetic. In a letter to Cyrus Field, published later in the *St. John's Times*, Mackay said he had tried to make a deal with the merchants in 1867 to supply English news obtained at company expense from the Associated Press at Heart's Content to each subscriber for \$1,000 per annum. But the arrangement fell through at the end of that year. A cheaper rate was offered the following year, but Mackay said the company received no payment for transmissions.<sup>78</sup> Mackay's letter contained the witnessing signature of A.W. Harvey, then president of the Commercial Society.<sup>79</sup> Clearly in charge, Mackay appeared to intimidate the merchants, and had the support of the press. Despite Mackay's strong position, the telegraph system was fraught with setbacks.

## 7.8

## Conclusion

It was not until 1885 that the island could be said to have local telegraphic communication. To celebrate, in that year of a general election, for the first time in the colony's history, polling results were telegraphed from every district as newspapers in St. John's waited to print the news. However, if it were to be a harbinger of local telegraph news, even if there had been a willingness on the part of the local press to

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<sup>78</sup>*St. John's Times*, 6 August 1873.

<sup>79</sup>A week later the Commercial Society reported they had received a 25 per cent discount on cable tolls to other parts of North America.

make use of it, which seems unlikely, other factors must be considered. Apart from occasional vandalism, weather and wind conditions continued to frequently interrupt telegraph service for weeks at a time to the end of the century.<sup>80</sup>

J.F. Morris, editor of the short-lived daily *Register*, had earlier lamented that the telegraph served little purpose locally; that Newfoundland was scarcely more than a "landing place for the shore ends of telegraph cables ...."<sup>81</sup> His remark echoed the old clichés describing Newfoundland as nothing more than a fishing stage in the North Atlantic, and its fishery a nursery for the British Navy.<sup>82</sup> Certainly the Newfoundland government had encouraged development of new technologies with generous charters and land grants, but financial investment came from outside interests whose focus remained on their business outside Newfoundland. Local businessmen, the majority of whom were also the leading politicians, government officials, legal authorities, and newspaper publishers, were reluctant to demand more or to pursue greater possibilities on their own initiative. The fact that new technologies force change was altered by

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<sup>80</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 17 October 1885. See also, *Twillingate Sun*, 13 February 1886; *Twillingate Sun*, 24 January 1891.

<sup>81</sup>*Register*, 28 September 1880. The *Register* was owned by a group of 12 unidentified stockholders supporting the Liberal party and printed by J.P. Rahl. See *Register*, 18 September 1880. The printing press was purchased from Powell & Company of London through local broker, W.H. Mare. See *Register*, 25 September 1880. After only three months the *Register* disappeared from the scene. The last extant issue is 16 December 1880.

<sup>82</sup>Such remarks were legion among those who constantly complained that the island's wealth and importance were not appreciated outside of Newfoundland.

particular circumstances. Local editors took advantage of telegraph news only to the extent they were willing to pay for it, but most reprinted it from their rivals. Telegraphy had some modernizing influence in nineteenth-century Newfoundland, and attracted world attention, but it barely changed the nature or function of its newspaper press.

Industrial consciousness and ideas of progress prevailed, however, because the commercial value of technology was understood. Telegraphy was now established on the island, as Prowse said, at no financial burden to the country.<sup>83</sup> Politicians then turned all of their attention in the 1880s to building a railway. These combined technologies are historically linked to aggressive expansion of newspapers and newspaper markets, most notably in large metropolitan environments. In Newfoundland, in the 1880s, the number of newspapers was in decline.<sup>84</sup> Daily newspapers were tried and failed. The first successful daily newspaper coincided with initial railway planning, but it was its opposition to the proposal that led to a second daily paper and the ensuing newspaper debate that sustained the new daily press in a new era.

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<sup>83</sup>Prowse, *A History*, 639, n.1.

<sup>84</sup>Out of 24 newspapers in circulation in 1880, some were new, but extremely short-lived, and only nine were still in the market in 1890.



## 8.1

## Introduction

Technical and mechanical innovations worldwide, and new forms of social and political association were impulses influencing the first attempts at establishing a daily newspaper press in Newfoundland in the 1860s. Given the small market, the lack of coordination among publishers, and the costs involved, its failure is not surprising.

Attempts at daily newspaper publishing in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were made in the 1840s and again in the 1850s, but before the end of the decade those newspapers too, had either ceased or reverted to weekly or bi-weekly productions.<sup>1</sup> Prince Edward Island's first daily did not appear until 1874. Even in the largest cities of central Canada, the Toronto *Globe*, which began in 1844, and the Montreal *Gazette*<sup>2</sup> did not switch to daily publishing until 1853 and 1854 respectively.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The *American newspaper directory and record of the press: containing an accurate listing of all newspapers(...) in the United States and British provinces of North America* (New York, Watson, 1861). See also Heather Boylan, *Checklist and Historical Directory of Prince Edward Island Newspapers 1787 - 1986*, (Charlottetown: Public Archives of Prince Edward Island, 1987); Lynn Murphy and Brenda Hicks, *Nova Scotia Newspapers: A Directory and Union List 1752-1988*, (Halifax: Dalhousie University School of Library and Information Studies, 1990). I am grateful to Sandra Burrows, newspaper specialist, Reference and Information Services, National Library of Canada for information on Nova Scotia and New Brunswick daily newspapers.

<sup>2</sup>The *Montreal Gazette* began as the weekly, *La Gazette du Commerce et Littéraire*, in 1778. See Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 40-43.

George Brown's Toronto *Globe* was said to be the most successful daily, with a circulation of 20,000 before 1870, and at a subscription rate of \$5 a year, the most profitable.<sup>4</sup> Paul Rutherford noted the lack of advertising revenue in the Maritimes, but asserted that the public preferred dailies to bi-weeklies or even tri-weeklies. Consequently, once a publisher "took the plunge," a competitor was forced to follow.<sup>5</sup> In Canada, the growth of a national political party system needed a daily press, as did the brand-name manufacturers and the increasing numbers of department stores. In short, the daily press was necessary for the "effective integration of a transcontinental community."<sup>6</sup> Put another way, by the 1880s, newspapers --

...had been brought inside the industrial framework; the editor had become the linchpin of all party political activity; and the readers had been drawn into the vastly expanded role of the newspaper, which aroused them to political action, helped them in their businesses, taught them the arts of urban life or just entertained them.<sup>7</sup>

In the large Canadian cities, daily newspaper circulation reached about 700,000 by the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> In Newfoundland, editors were certainly vital to party politics, but the evidence does not support a "vastly expanded role" for the newspaper as the most

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<sup>4</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 42.

<sup>5</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 43.

<sup>6</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 232-233.

<sup>7</sup>Anthony Smith, *The Newspaper: An International History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 105.

<sup>8</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, Figure 1, 5. Rutherford did not include St. John's or Charlottetown in his study.

effective way of arousing people to political action. Business was also served by newspapers, but an industrial framework hardly existed for the small market in Newfoundland.

Between 1860 and 1899 a total of 20 daily newspapers were published in St. John's, the majority being short-lived and of little consequence.<sup>9</sup> This chapter focuses on the two most important daily newspapers beginning with the establishment of a permanent daily newspaper press in St. John's in 1879. It will show that advertising, more than the new technologies, was the motivating force behind that venture, but that the political issue of building a railway was the genesis of a second daily newspaper which defined the relationships of the two, and sustained competition to the end of the century. This chapter will also show that the new technologies had a more direct influence on the emergence of a new weekly outport press which took advantage of increased illustrated advertising, but was ultimately bound by personal, religious, and political allegiances that had always characterized the Newfoundland press. It will further show that while both the telegraph and the railway motivated the start of a new outport press, they did not expand the St. John's market before the end of the century.

## 8.2

### Mood of the Times versus Size of the Market

After the confederation of the mainland provinces in 1867 the daily newspaper

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<sup>9</sup>A brief profile of each daily newspaper is provided in Appendix no. 3, 328-332.

press evolved in a similar pattern of modernization occurring elsewhere. American "popular journalism" which had previously influenced the British to adopt a more entertaining style for a diverse readership, was adopted in Newfoundland as well as other British North American newspapers. According to Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolfe,

[t]he Press in all its manifestations became during the Victorian period the context in which people lived and worked and thought, and from which they derived their (in most cases quite new) sense of the outside world.<sup>10</sup>

Toward the end of the century, the "new journalism" used bigger and bolder headlines, wider columns, bigger advertisements and showy illustrations. These innovations, made possible by cheaper newsprint and advances in printing,<sup>11</sup> added to the expansion of big-city newspapers already utilizing both telegraph and railway. These so-called "people's journals" competed with (and would eventually replace) party organs and sectarian papers in the larger cities.<sup>12</sup> In Newfoundland, the distinction was less marked. To produce a better looking and more modern newspaper was a matter of obtaining the latest equipment available which was also affordable. Expansion of the

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<sup>10</sup>Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolfe *The Victorian periodical press: samplings and soundings* (Leicester: Leicesster University Press; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 297-316, cited in Michael Harris and Alan Lee, *The Press in English Society from seventeenth to nineteenth centuries* (London; Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1986), 111.

<sup>11</sup>Marion T. Marzolf, "American 'New Journalism' Takes Root In Europe at End of 19th Century," *Journalism Quarterly*, 61, 3, 1984, 529.

<sup>12</sup>Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 4 - 5.

market was not as easy, even if it were considered. The late 1870s and early 1880s also marked the end of an era in newspaper publishing in Newfoundland. By that time, almost all of the pioneer proprietors and editors had either died, left Newfoundland, or had ceased publishing. The new starts being made were at a time when daily publishing had become more feasible than ever before, even without the telegraph or the railway.

In the summer of 1879 when a telegraph line was completed between Heart's Content and Hants Harbour in Trinity Bay, a distance of about 15 miles, the editor of the newly launched daily newspaper the *Evening Telegram*, described the event as "destined to ... [open] up and develop [] our inexhaustible -- though at present latent -- stores of mineral wealth." He also envisioned the telegraph "rendering aid in the prosecution of the fisheries around our coasts."<sup>13</sup> It was an exaggeration; news of the fisheries continued to be supplied more reliably by schooner captains arriving from the voyage, or by correspondents in the outports.<sup>14</sup> At the close of 1879 news of competing telegraph companies in the United States appeared conspicuously in the editorial column bearing the headline: "The Benefits of an Independent Opposition Telegraph Line." However, the editor offered no comment on the monopoly still held

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<sup>13</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1879.

<sup>14</sup>Ryan pointed out that the telegraph was not used effectively to keep fishermen informed about foreign markets. See Shannon Ryan, "The Newfoundland Salt Cod Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Newfoundland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Essays in Interpretation*, 40-66.

by the telegraph company in Newfoundland. Nor was there a suggestion that newspapers would take advantage of the telegraph business.

Nevertheless, the first daily newspaper to survive in Newfoundland, the *Evening Telegram*, began 3 April 1879<sup>15</sup> as an advertising sheet, printed on an old wooden hand press, and looked that way. Even a decade earlier, the *Morning Chronicle* was a more handsome production, turned out on a hand-operated rotary press -- the first in Newfoundland. But the *Telegram* encouraged advertising, which had become even more essential in an industrial and commercial age, and established its position in the local market with innovative coloured paper, and a price of only one cent a copy. The relative cheapness of paper made from wood pulp and the interest in advertising made the purchase of more modern presses, such as the Quadrant, worthwhile by 1880. Circulation increased from a few hundred to a thousand -- "a wonder in those days."<sup>16</sup> The few publishers who re-established newspapers after the 1892 fire that wiped out every printing plant in St. John's acquired even more modern steam, gasoline, and eventually electric presses.<sup>17</sup>

Historically, a daily press is thought to be a mass medium directed to "a large,

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<sup>15</sup>A prospectus for the *Evening Telegram* has not survived; the earliest extant issue is 8 April 1879.

<sup>16</sup>W.H. Goodland, "Thirty Years of Journalism," *The Trade Review and Commercial Annual*, St. John's, 23 March 1901.

<sup>17</sup>Goodland, "Thirty Years of Journalism."

anonymous, and heterogeneous public,"<sup>18</sup> a definition unsuited to nineteenth-century Newfoundland society. Here instead, a daily press emerged more or less on its own, starting small, and recognizing the potential in advertising to make it grow, as perhaps nothing else could. The telegraph that had focused world attention on Newfoundland was, from the start, a private business venture of foreign capitalists interested in world markets. Local small-town newspaper proprietors in Newfoundland were of little significance, nor was there much opportunity for them to be involved. However, the telegraph, once established on the island, combined with mineral resource development in Notre Dame Bay and the promise of a railway in the 1880s, created hope of prosperity conducive to a new outpost press at Twillingate and Trinity, and ignited an opposition press in St. John's as a second daily, the *Evening Mercury*, appeared in 1882. It was a new era, with new players, and new issues. Debating the pros and cons of industry and commerce was enough to sustain a daily press to the end of the century, which it did with the politics of the railway, and without ever discussing the potential a railway might have in expanding the newspaper market itself. While the daily press in St. John's was well-received, it could not claim to have a mass market, except within the Avalon Peninsula.

The vibrancy of the railway debate, and the discussion of a wage-based mining industry in the northern district, the telegraph, and the capability of modern printing

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<sup>18</sup>Denis McQuail, *Toward a Sociology of Mass Communications* (New York: Longman, 1969), 7-11, cited in Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 4.

presses to produce clean, finely illustrated advertisements for all sorts of commodities, was all the incentive needed to start the *Twillingate Sun* in 1880, and the Trinity *Weekly Record* in 1886. The *Record*, whose main political purpose was to support railway construction, was of a much lesser quality in appearance, and lasted only a few years.<sup>19</sup> The *Twillingate Sun* remained strong to the mid-twentieth century within its own localized market. First published 24 June 1880, it promoted telegraph communication as the key to opening the northern district to the outside world. Publisher and editor Jabez P. Thompson had family ties to the telegraph business, and was interested in its expansion if only for that reason, but also understood its potential.<sup>20</sup> A brief look at the *Twillingate Sun* provides some insight into the mood of

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<sup>19</sup>In 1886, about a year after W.V. Whiteway had resigned as prime minister at the height of renewed sectarian politics, the *Weekly Record* was published in Trinity West, the electoral district represented by Whiteway since 1873. When he returned after a four year hiatus in 1889, he again represented Trinity West along with Robert Bond, the future prime minister, and D.C. Webber, the publisher of the *Weekly Record*. Webber died in a drowning accident in 1893 after which the *Weekly Record* was suspended. His widow, Violet Webber took over the proprietorship and hired J.A. Barrett, (later editor of the *Western Star* 1904-08) to manage the business until it closed. It was not replaced. See PRL, GN/32/3 affidavit, 31 January 1898.

<sup>20</sup>J.P. Thompson's uncle, W.H. Thompson, is credited with teaching telegraphy to numerous students at Harbour Grace, many of whom reportedly held prominent positions in the telegraph business in Newfoundland, Canada, and the United States. A brother, Apollos, and cousins Eugene Thompson and Harold E. Thompson were employed by the Anglo-American Cable Company at Harbour Grace and Heart's Content. Another cousin, Edwin F. Howell was also a telegraph operator at Heart's Content, and Port Mulgrave, Strait of Canso, and later took a position with the Western Union Telegraph Company in New York where he founded the Telegraph Mutual Aid Society. See G.J. Ainley Thompson, M.D., *The Thompson Family History* (London, Ontario, 1937). My thanks to archivist, Bert Riggs of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland, for directing



the times and the changes taking place in the social structure of Newfoundland toward the end of the century.

## 8.3

*The Twillingate Sun*

In 1880 Twillingate was the most central, densely populated community in Notre Dame Bay in the northern district of the island of Newfoundland. The combined population with the neighbouring towns Moreton's Harbour, Herring Neck, Little Harbour, Bett's Cove, and Little Bay, was about 5000.<sup>21</sup> Yet, news from the "outside world" was often four to eight weeks old, if it came at all.<sup>22</sup> An historically important fishing centre, Twillingate was a busy harbour connected with the Labrador fisheries. Local planters were involved in ship building and a bustling fleet of 200 vessels sailed yearly to the Labrador, some involved in the spring seal fishery. Mineral deposits in the area attracted speculators and outside investment in ore discoveries at Little Bay and Bett's Cove where copper mining started around 1878. Within two years the latter was a thriving town of almost 1,500 people with "many fine comfortable dwellings."<sup>23</sup> Toward the end of 1880, an estimated 20,000 tons of copper, for that season alone,

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<sup>21</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 24 February 1881.

<sup>22</sup>Letters to the editor, *Twillingate Sun*, 24 February 1881; 5 May 1881.

<sup>23</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 5 August 1880.

was destined for the United Kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Demand for electricity and telegraph communication to the mine sites intensified in this period of industrial development. J.P. Thompson, who had apprenticed as a printer at the *Harbour Grace Standard*, and later worked at the *Public Ledger* in St. John's,<sup>25</sup> saw signs of prosperity in Notre Dame Bay, an ideal place to start a newspaper of his own.

As a member of a long line of highly educated Methodists,<sup>26</sup> Thompson also considered Twillingate, where conversion to Methodism had flourished,<sup>27</sup> receptive to a newspaper "Pledged to Religion, Liberty, and Law."<sup>28</sup> Temperance was a consistent topic, as was the popular feature "From Newfoundland to China," written by his

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<sup>24</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 18 November 1880.

<sup>25</sup>G.J. Ainley Thompson, *The Thompson Family History*, 83.

<sup>26</sup>Dr. John Thompson of Carbonear was recognized as one of the founders of Methodism in Newfoundland. See G.J. Ainley Thompson, *The Thompson Family History*, 32-33.

<sup>27</sup>Methodism steadily increased in the northern district from mid-century to the end of the century. The census report for the electoral district of Twillingate showed Methodists numbered almost twice those of Anglicans and Roman Catholics combined. In 1901 almost two thirds of the population were Methodists. See *Census of Newfoundland*, 1857, 1891, and 1901.

<sup>28</sup>The *Sun's* motto was a derivative of the quotation, "Here shall the Press the People's Rights maintain, unawed by Influence and unbribed by gain; Here Patriot Truth her Glorious Precepts draw, Pledged to Religion, Liberty, and Law." The origin of the motto was Joseph Story's *Salem Register* (1802). See John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 9th edition, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1919).

brother, Rev. James Brett Thompson, describing his world mission experiences.<sup>29</sup>

Thompson suggested the *Sun* would elevate the intellectual status of coastal people who were "ignorant of the most important events ... either in their own or in other lands...." It would be difficult, he said, with the exception of a few principal towns, to find "any part of the known world where inhabitants possess such limited literary acquirement as in our own [country]."<sup>30</sup> At the same time, in light of the new technologies coming on stream, Thompson imagined Twillingate becoming the metropolis of the northern district:

In a mercantile point of view we suppose ... few places outside of the Capital that may be considered of greater importance ... and the convenience and serious losses which our mercantile men sometimes experience owing to non-extension of a telegraph line here are very considerable.<sup>31</sup>

Communication by way of steam vessel was often unreliable in northern waters where ice jams were sometimes experienced in summer.<sup>32</sup> Despite rumblings about railway construction which might also address that problem, the *Sun's* editorial position was firmly in favour of the telegraph:

... however much we may desire to see the much-talked-of Railway scheme accomplished, a great injustice would be done the people by

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<sup>29</sup>The series of articles by Rev. J. B. Thompson ran between July 1886 and November 1889.

<sup>30</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 24 June 1880.

<sup>31</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 5 August 1880.

<sup>32</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 29 July 1880.

debaring them from the advantage of a telegraph line with the promise, it may be in a few years, a locomotive engine may be speeding through the fertile tracts of the Interior and thereby putting us in daily receipt of all the latest intelligence. We want the telegraph line extended first, and when that is accomplished the Railway scheme will probably be received with more approbation by our people.<sup>33</sup>

It was a futile hope; many northern communities, Barr'd Islands, Change Islands, Tilting Harbour, and Seldom-Come-Bye, ports which carried on "considerable business," were still calling for telegraph service in 1887. Thompson had long since reversed his position on the railway project. Within a year of publication he conceded that the fishery was less remunerative with each passing year, and that "farming might be more extensive if roads were made inland." A railroad "supported by foreign investment" he agreed, would answer the need.<sup>34</sup> When the railway resolutions were passed in the legislature in the spring of 1881, Thompson supported the borrowing of money to complete a line from St. John's to Notre Dame Bay. He claimed he had favoured a railway "from the first,"

...believing it to be the only course that can be adopted calculated to foster the interest of the Colony in every particular, and avert the evil consequences that must ultimately follow if our people continue to be dependent upon the scanty means of earning a livelihood at present within their reach.<sup>35</sup>

This was a decided change from Thompson's earlier insistence that telegraph

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<sup>33</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 5 August 1880.

<sup>34</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 17 March 1881.

<sup>35</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 28 April 1881.

communication should precede a rail line to the area. All through the spring of 1881 the *Sun* reported every debate on the project, including the full text of a speech by James Winter, then Attorney General, which filled the front page of one edition and carried over into a second refuting any possible "bug bear" raised against the proposal.<sup>36</sup>

To what extent Thompson was politically co-opted at this time is not known, but almost immediately following his change of heart on the railway proposal, he was elevated as the first man "from the district" to be elected to the House of Assembly in the general election of 1882. He was re-elected in 1885, 1889, and 1893, while continuing to be proprietor and editor of the *Sun*. The newspaper flourished as local suppliers responded to a thriving wage-based mining industry and the promise of a railroad. Their illustrated advertisements for dry goods, provisions and hardware, leather goods, and assorted hats and bonnets "trimmed to order," drew competition from wholesale and retail advertisers in St. John's offering brass fittings, ironware, furniture, soap, ready-made men's clothing, and Oxford shoes. This competition between opposite ends of the island was good for the *Sun* and for the *Telegram* in St. John's. They both traded news articles and correspondence including news of the Labrador fishery not often seen in St. John's newspapers before the introduction of the *Twillingate Sun*. Thompson predicted completion of a rail line to Hall's Bay in Notre Dame Bay could only increase trade (newspaper distribution was never mentioned) and

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<sup>36</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 12 May 1881.

that more money would be in circulation in 1883 because of the wages earned by those engaged in its construction. He reminded readers that the company was bound by a \$100,000 penalty to complete and hand over ownership to the government in three years, hence the urgency to finish the 360-mile track. He also reminded readers of the folly of dependence on the fishery, a "single and uncertain industry."<sup>37</sup> It was a viewpoint expressed in most of the newspapers -- at least they agreed on the idea of a trans-island railway. The exception was the new St. John's daily newspaper, *Evening Telegram*.

#### 8.4 *Evening Telegram: From Advertising Sheet to Political Upstart*

William J. Herder, born in Old Perlican, Trinity Bay, went to work at 16 as a printer for Joseph Woods, Methodist proprietor of the *Courier*. Details are sketchy but after the *Courier* stopped publishing,<sup>38</sup> Herder acquired the old printing equipment and launched the *Evening Telegram*.<sup>39</sup> Published "every afternoon from the *Courier* office, 218 Duckworth Street," it was priced at one cent a copy, or \$3.20 per annum, one of the least expensive papers, an important factor for survival in a small market. The low

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<sup>37</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 27 January 1883.

<sup>38</sup>The last issue of the *Courier* located is 28 December 1878.

<sup>39</sup>Despite its uninterrupted success as a daily newspaper which continues to the present day, very little of the history of the *Telegram*, other than what is in its pages, is known. Surviving members of the Herder family were unable to provide many details. According to the Newfoundland Government Registry of Deeds, incorporation of the newspaper as a company did not occur until 1921.

subscription price, the low advertising rates, and the pink paper on which it was printed must have accounted for its success, unequalled at the time.<sup>40</sup> Within two months, the *Evening Telegram* sold 1,200 copies daily. It made no pretence at enlightenment, but said of itself, "as an advertising medium, nothing can touch it."<sup>41</sup> At least three-quarters of its four pages were filled with advertisements, including all of the front page. The remainder contained reports of "drunk and disorderly" petty crime, ladies' auxiliaries, and the results of football and cricket matches. Editorials dealt mostly with the promotion of temperance and reports from temperance meetings. One issue featured a message about the Cross of Christ, type-set on the front page in the shape of a cross. At the end of its first year, news and editorials reflected some interest in politics. Within two years, after the paper was well established, it took on a more political role, conservative in every sense. By then, Herder had purchased more modern presses and moved to larger premises.

In 1882, a second daily, the *Evening Mercury*, entered the market and was immediately identified in the *Evening Telegram* as "the government organ, paid for by the taxpayers."<sup>42</sup> The rivalry between the *Telegram* and the *Liberal Mercury* intensified

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<sup>40</sup>No information was located to explain the use of coloured paper, or how it was obtained.

<sup>41</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1879

<sup>42</sup>The shareholders of the *Evening Mercury* were not identified, but it was generally held that the newspaper was "warmed into life" by William Whiteway. In 1886, A.A. Parsons claimed that A.J.W. McNeily, Speaker of the House of Assembly in Whiteway's first administration, shared the editorial duties of the *Mercury* with

when the *Mercury*, new to the market, received the government printing contract lost by the *Public Ledger*.<sup>43</sup> The shift to a competitive daily press in Newfoundland had thus begun.

#### 8.5 The Press, the Railway, and the "Policy of Progress"

The 1880s, as opposed to the 1860s were ready for a daily newspaper press in Newfoundland mainly because of the affordability of more modern printing presses. The railway was extremely important, not as a means of newspaper distribution, but as a crucial political issue. It severed old party ties, giving rise to a "New Party" which found voice in the burgeoning *Telegram*, supported especially by merchants concerned about the cost of a railway.<sup>44</sup> These were exciting times. The elderly Robert Parsons of the weekly *Patriot*, though he made no attempt to go daily, considered the 1880s the most significant period in Newfoundland history.<sup>45</sup> His career and his newspaper were starting to wind down, as were the *Ledger*, and the *Newfoundlander*, all around the same time, having been in operation more than 50 years. In this new political

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Moses Harvey. See *Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1886; 29 July 1886; and 31 July 1886. McNeily was a partner of Whiteway's in the Newfoundland Consolidated Copper Mining Company. See biographical sketch of McNeily, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, v. 3, 422.

<sup>43</sup>The loss of a government printing contract may have triggered the demise of the *Public Ledger* in 1882.

<sup>44</sup>Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics," 132.

<sup>45</sup>*Patriot*, 16 January 1882.



atmosphere, the opportunity for a daily press had arrived; the issue of building a railway attracted both patronage and advertising. As it fuelled public debate elsewhere, "railway fever" had an important effect on the newspaper press in nineteenth-century Newfoundland. In the beginning at least, it was a mutual dependence.

In the rest of British North America the discussion of railways, commonly referred to as "the iron bond of nationhood," -- the essence of modern society -- preoccupied the newspaper press. In Newfoundland, telegraphy had been understood by most local newspaper publishers as a boon to progress even if its potential for increased circulation was beyond their grasp. Likewise, a railway across the island was discussed not in terms of newspaper expansion but as the key to opening up the country for industry beyond the fishery. This was the "Policy of Progress" of William Whiteway's Liberal administration, and the *Evening Mercury* was said to be his "mouthpiece," a title its editor, Moses Harvey,<sup>46</sup> did not deny. In contrast, the *Evening Telegram* stood firmly opposed to Whiteway's proposals. It was this political polarization over the building of a railway in the 1880s, a single, but intense issue, that provided a highly charged public debate, ideal for sustaining daily newspaper consumption.

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<sup>46</sup>Harvey came to Newfoundland in 1852. Born in 1820, of Scottish descent in Armagh, Ireland, he graduated from the Royal College in Belfast with honours in Greek, logic, and moral philosophy. Ordained in 1844, he was eight years in England before taking his post in Newfoundland. See F.A. Aldrich, "Harvey, Moses," *DCB*, XIII, 455-456.

## 8.6 Moses Harvey, the *Evening Mercury*, and the "Policy of Progress"

The sole reason for launching the *Evening Mercury* was to promote the building of a railway:

Towards the close of last year, a few gentlemen interested themselves in the establishment of a new paper and the present writer [Harvey] took part in the movement...the cause of progress [being] without an advocate in the press...Hence, the *Evening Mercury* had its origins as the exponent of the Policy of Progress identified with that policy.<sup>47</sup>

The "Policy of Progress" slogan of the Whiteway administration embellished the pages of the *Mercury* on a daily basis. The newspaper's mission, clearly outlined in its prospectus, was to promote the government's involvement in building a railway as "the new pathway of industry." This mission, Harvey claimed, was as important as "tunnelling the Alps and uniting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by the Panama Canal."<sup>48</sup> If there were any doubt, the newspaper's front page banner displayed a timely illustration of a locomotive pulling into a depot, smoke billowing; in the background schooners sailing into port. The caption read, "This Newfoundland of Ours," the title of Harvey's first public speech at the Athenaeum four years earlier, in which he told members that a railway was an "absolute necessity" for Newfoundland.<sup>49</sup> At that time (1878) Harvey was minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Free Church in St. John's, a

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<sup>47</sup>*Evening Mercury*, 7 July 1882.

<sup>48</sup>Editorial, *Evening Mercury*, 21 March 1882.

<sup>49</sup>Moses Harvey, "This Newfoundland of Ours," a lecture delivered to the St. John's Athenaeum, 11 February 1878, from a *Series of Papers on the Natural Resources and Future Prospects of the Colony*, 102.

position he held while pursuing a career as a journalist. Harvey was already known for his promotion of Newfoundland in articles he contributed to British and Canadian periodicals. He was also special correspondent to the *Montreal Gazette*, and the *Boston Traveller*.<sup>50</sup> While editing the *Evening Mercury*, Harvey co-wrote a history of Newfoundland with the American journalist, Joseph Hatton.<sup>51</sup>

As a clergyman he was often criticized for "wielding a trenchant pen" in political commentary. He defended his status, explaining that he had retired from the ministry in 1880 because he had "lost [his] voice." He felt free as a "private citizen" to exercise his journalistic skills, and besides, he claimed he did not take a salary as editor of the *Evening Mercury*.<sup>52</sup> This was probably not difficult, given his income from other sources, and the fact that on his retirement from the Church, the congregation provided him with a lifetime annuity.<sup>53</sup> Just as Harvey believed the

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<sup>50</sup>Toronto *Globe* clipping, Moses Harvey Papers, Collection 41, 1820 - 1901, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland. The *Boston Traveller* was printed by Andrew McCoubrey, brother of J. W. McCoubrey, owner of the *St. John's Times*. See obituary of A. McCoubrey, *Evening Telegram*, 3 February 1885. See also Gert Crosbie, *Directory, of Births, Deaths, and Marriages*, v. 6.

<sup>51</sup>Editorial, *Evening Mercury* 7 July 1882. The book, *Newfoundland*, was published in Boston in 1883. Harvey also contributed articles on Newfoundland and Labrador to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and literary journals around the world. The author of his obituary in the *Evening Telegram*, 3 September 1901, likened Harvey's writing to that of his "famous countryman, Oliver Goldsmith." See also Moses Harvey Papers, Collection 41, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland .

<sup>52</sup>Editorial, *Evening Mercury* , 7 July 1882.

<sup>53</sup>Harvey obituary, *Evening Telegram*, 3 September 1901.

newspaper press to be "the greatest engine for the enlightenment and elevation of the people," so did he believe that a railway was "the one essential for the progress of the colony and the development of its resources."<sup>54</sup> It was essential, he said, to "strain every nerve, and submit to almost any sacrifice in order to obtain this grand necessity of modern civilization."<sup>55</sup> Were he prime minister, he would "plot and scheme and scrape and pare, and revise the tariff, and do everything short of stealing," until he had enough money to build a railroad.<sup>56</sup> He would even take the Halifax Commission fisheries award of more than a million dollars<sup>57</sup> and invest it to raise money to build a railroad. He envisioned a statue of himself [were he prime minister] erected by a "grateful posterity." Whiteway could hardly have had a more devoted ally in the press. Except perhaps for the statue, Harvey's ideas coincided with his own.

Significantly, 1882 was an election year in which the building of a railway was the central election issue.<sup>58</sup> Railway stories from around the world filled the paper, sometimes even in the form of fiction. Illustrations of a locomotive in advertisements

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<sup>54</sup>Editorial, *Evening Mercury*, 7 July 1882.

<sup>55</sup>Harvey, "This Newfoundland of Ours," 113.

<sup>56</sup>Harvey, "This Newfoundland of Ours," 116.

<sup>57</sup>In 1877, William Whiteway, then solicitor general, successfully argued the case for Newfoundland before an arbitration panel set up in Halifax to assess the monetary value of fishing privileges to Americans in shared territorial waters. See Hiller, "Whiteway", *DCB*, XIII, 1090. For further discussion of Whiteway's administration, see Hiller, "A History of Newfoundland, 1874-1901."

<sup>58</sup>Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics," 132.

became commonplace in the local press, but none could compare to the elaborate treatment in the *Evening Mercury*. George Bearns, for example, advertised his shop on Water Street as the "*Railway Provisions Store: The Shortline Route!!* for cigarettes and tobacco of all kinds." J.F. Chisholm pushed the sale of books such as *Steam and the Locomotive* by Henry Evers, LL.D., and R. Scott Brown's *Building Construction: Timber, Lead and Iron Work*. In June, John Hail, a hardware dealer took half a page to describe a new shipment of MINING AND RAILWAY REQUIREMENTS: blasting powder, portable forges and anvils, bench vices and the like. The Newfoundland Furniture and Moulding Company claimed, "*The Short Line Railway Project is the next thing in the STEP OF PROGRESS TO THE PATENT ROCKER.*"<sup>59</sup> A local theatre group called themselves "THE LOCOMOTIVE MINSTREL TROUPE" and advertised its "Grand Entertainment" under the auspices of the *Star of the Sea Association*. Theatre goers were promised an exhibit of railway views at the intermission by "Mr. Sleator ... with a magic lantern." A review later claimed a packed house with many people turned away.<sup>60</sup>

## 8.7 Cutting Railway Ties versus Harvesting Fish

During the autumn and winter months, the *Evening Mercury* reported the

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<sup>59</sup>The short line railway scheme was a proposal for integrating trans-continental and trans-Atlantic transportation systems, which, conceivably might include Newfoundland.

<sup>60</sup>These advertisements appeared in the *Evening Mercury* April through June, 1882.

streets of St. John's "crowded with able men begging employment."<sup>61</sup> Fishermen in the outports viewed railway work as a way out of debt. Letters to the editor were almost always in favour of the railway especially as a means of creating paid work. One of the most compelling came from Miles Mulcahey, a fisherman with a wife and six children. Each year, by July, he was in debt to a merchant or planter £30 for flour, pork, molasses, tea, tobacco, cordage for boat, canvas for sail repair, clothing for family --

I have had a good voyage (thanks be to God) and I have £50 to the credit of my account, but by the end of September, when the fishing is over I have only just a few pounds left to lay in my winter diet...I cut my little crop of hay, my wife and children can dig the potatoes; in ordinary years...I would not earn two shillings perhaps not one shilling a day from October to the end of the year; just consider then Mr. Editor what a God-send it is to me and to poor fishermen like me to get work on the Railway and earn four and five shillings a day for three months. I have been careful with my money. I did not take a glass barrin Christmas Day and the New Year and with my Railway money, I have laid in the whole of my winter diet. If it was not for the Railway, I must have to got the heft of this on credit. Now I am a free man.<sup>62</sup>

Mulcahey's letter encouraged others to write. From Holyrood, "... every man able and willing to work can obtain employment here in cutting sleepers [ties], beams and bridge material...there are no opponents to the railway in Holyrood, to a man all welcome it." From Twillingate: "Who ever heard of a railway that did not facilitate

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<sup>61</sup>Editorial, *Evening Mercury*, 6 January 1882.

<sup>62</sup>*Evening Mercury*, 18 January 1882. Work on the railroad began the previous summer. The *Mercury* reported the sod-turning ceremony 9 August 1881, after the American developers had deposited \$100,000 in U.S. bonds.

and increase trade?" From Placentia: "There has not been an application...for pauper relief. Placentia blesses the Railway and will return to the House of Assembly ... Railway men to the backbone." From Bay of Islands, pleas for the railway that could "ship a quarter of a million barrels of beautiful fresh fat herring through the Humber Valley to connect with the other side." Mulcahey wrote again, this time suggesting that fishermen in "crowded" Petty Harbour should "settle along the rail line," and urging that the American company building the line provide homes for them.

As practical as Mulcahey's suggestion may have been, the handling of the railway contract became a contentious issue at the core of political party debate sustained by the "government organ," the *Evening Mercury*, and the *Evening Telegram*, now its arch rival as the "opposition paper." Caustic editorials took particular aim at anyone supporting the railway in its early stage of construction, including J.I. Little, the Liberal member for Harbour Main. Insulted by editorial references to Little, Holyrood constituents threatened violence against the *Telegram* editor in letters to the *Mercury*:

Perhaps it would be wise to drop the "Harbour Main Man," in further issues, lest about the first of March a real Harbour Main Man might call at Gregory's Lane to ask an explanation of these articles and might bring with him a bit of timber grown in the district.<sup>63</sup>

Suggestions of land expropriation in the Foxtrap area for railway construction drew similarly violent threats from that area reported in the *Telegram* and played down,

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<sup>63</sup>*Evening Mercury*, 9 February 1882.

predictably, in the *Mercury*.<sup>64</sup>

## 8.8 James Murray, A.A. Parsons, and *The Evening Telegram*

The identity of the *Telegram* editor in its first few years is somewhat obscure. Alexander A. Parsons is believed to have been the editor from the start, but some evidence suggests otherwise.<sup>65</sup> Parsons's name did not appear in the masthead as editor until 1882. For a while at least, Moses Harvey referred to his rival editor as James Murray, St. John's businessman. Certainly, Murray was connected with and provided editorial material for the *Telegram*. As well, large advertisements for Murray's business appeared on the front page.<sup>66</sup> The preponderance of editorials and other articles on

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<sup>64</sup>It was common practice for criticism of one newspaper to be carried in letters to the editor of its rival.

<sup>65</sup>Letters and manuscripts were directed to W.J. Herder, printer and publisher, 218 Duckworth Street, or to "Alexander A. Parsons, Water Street (under the YMC Association Rooms)".

<sup>66</sup>It is possible that Murray helped financially with setting up the *Telegram* and may have had advertising space in return for editorial writing. Murray was a journalist of some stature. Apart from political party differences, Murray and Moses Harvey had much in common. Both men were devoted to the betterment of Newfoundland. Murray was of Scot parentage, and native to Newfoundland. Though 30 years younger than Harvey, Murray was well travelled in Newfoundland, and like Harvey, wrote about its resources for various publications on and off the Island. Not as prolific as Harvey, he was also more reserved and cautious in his opinions. In January and February, 1895, at which time he may not have been connected with the *Telegram*, he wrote a series of letters to the editor regarding Newfoundland's financial outlook. Dissatisfied with their reception, Murray wrote and published a pamphlet, *The Commercial Crisis in Newfoundland: Causes, Consequences, and Cure*, (St. John's, 1895). In it he claimed he was precluded from presenting his views in the local newspapers because their "party lines were too tightly drawn."



temperance in the first year or two is suggestive of Murray's writing.<sup>67</sup> A more compelling reason is Murray's evidence in a suit against the railway contractor, Albert L. Blackman. In the spring of 1882, Murray charged that Blackman had physically attacked him outside the *Telegram* office following publication of an article discrediting the railway contract, and calling Blackman a "scoundrel." Murray told the magistrate, D.W. Prowse, that he did not provoke Blackman, and that he had not written the *Telegram* article with the phrase, "as sure as there's a heaven ... the scoundrel shall not go unpunished."<sup>68</sup> Harvey subsequently published Blackman's version of what happened. For days, the two newspapers were filled with editorial comment and letters of outrage. Judge Prowse's comments from the bench about "rowdy journalism" and the "licentiousness of the press" provided still more "grist for the mill." Further to these exchanges, Murray alleged he had never been the "actual responsible editor of the *Evening Telegram*."<sup>69</sup> What this meant exactly is unclear but the eventual appearance of A.A. Parsons's name as editor clarified the issue. The

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<sup>67</sup>Murray was a member of the St. John's Sons of Temperance. He wrote the annual report for the organization in 1867. In that year he arranged with the editor of the *Public Ledger*, Adam Scott, to write a series of "original temperance articles" for that newspaper. Murray was writing for the *Temperance Journal* between 1875 and 1878. It is possible that Murray filled the position of editor of the *Telegram* between 1879 and 1882 when Parsons took the job permanently. Temperance, however, remained a prominent issue in the *Telegram* to the end of the century. I am indebted to Jean Murray of St. John's for access to her private papers for information about James Murray, her grandfather, as businessman and journalist.

<sup>68</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 1 May 1882; 2 May 1882.

<sup>69</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 2 May 1882.

confusion does not alter the unmistakable differences between the two popular newspapers whose daily argument kept the railway dispute alive and vigorous, undoubtedly sustaining the circulation of both.

#### 8.9 The Railway Debate Sustains the Daily Press

"Railway mania" was a term likely coined by newspaper editors who promoted railway construction in the 1840s, along with investment and speculation in land ownership, development, transportation and distribution of goods. Such promotion led to increased newspaper circulation and distribution in large centres of the world. In Canada, fear of competition from aggressive American railroad companies provided the incentive for a railroad between Quebec and Nova Scotia.<sup>70</sup> Halifax editors boasted of improvements in that city, crying out for not one, but two railroads.<sup>71</sup> Reports from Cape Breton, whose population was less than half that of Newfoundland at the time, told of improvements in education, steam navigation, and roads, "running entirely around the Island with branches intersecting the country in every direction," and weekly mails penetrating to "nearly every settlement on the Island."<sup>72</sup> Such reports were often carried on the front page of the *Courier* to encourage local initiative in this

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<sup>70</sup>*Courier*, 30 May 1846.

<sup>71</sup>Extract from the *Halifax Chronicle* carried on the front page of the *Courier*, 30 May 1846.

<sup>72</sup>*Courier*, 30 May 1846.

period. Similar reports from New England newspapers also appeared in St. John's newspapers. In his study of the reading public of antebellum America, Ronald Zboray noted that newspapers were dispersed to almost every hamlet in the 1840s as a result of railway development, and consequently were tied to the economic life of the country.<sup>73</sup> Such a statement could not have been made about Newfoundland any time during the nineteenth century. Newspaper penetration was not a priority in the constant daily discussion of railway development even in the 1880s.

The main focus of the newspaper debate in 1882 was not so much the building of a narrow-gauge railway, as it was the way the original government contract had been handled in 1880. The government agreed to provide the Newfoundland Railway Company and A.L. Blackman with an annual subsidy of \$180,000 for thirty-five years along with land grants of 5,000 acres for each mile of railroad built. Construction materials would be admitted duty-free and the developers would receive a government loan toward the cost of acquiring the right-of-way. The line was to be completed in five years and owned by the company. The Newfoundland government retained an option to purchase the line after 35 years.<sup>74</sup> That contract became an "all-absorbing

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<sup>73</sup>*Universal Yankee Nation* 3 (8 April 1843) 759, cited in Ronald Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993) 13-14.

<sup>74</sup>For a full political discussion see: Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics," 123-147. See also A.R. Penney, *Centennial Newfoundland Railway 1881-1981* (St. John's: Creative Printers, 1981).

topic"<sup>75</sup> in many of the local newspapers, most of which supported the railway.<sup>76</sup> The *Harbour Grace Standard* was said to be Whiteway's "mouthpiece in the Bay," but none of the newspapers matched the daily fare in the *Evening Mercury* and the *Evening Telegram*.

A.E. Blackman was at the centre of the newspaper controversy. His involvement, and the conflicting portrayals of him in the *Mercury* and the *Telegram*, sustained a daily dialogue for most of 1882. It was Blackman's undertaking to build a railroad from St. John's to Halls Bay, a distance of 340 miles, with branch lines into Notre Dame Bay where copper mines were already producing good quantities of ore for export. Along the way, a branch line from Harbour Grace Junction (renamed Whitbourne in 1889) was planned to Harbour Grace. At the same time, Blackman was negotiating the Great American and European Short Line Railway, a "mammoth trans-continental, trans-oceanic railway and steamship scheme."<sup>77</sup> This proposed system involved a rail line across Cape Breton to Cape North; from there by steamer to Cape Ray, Newfoundland; from Cape Ray by rail to Trinity; then by steamer to the west

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<sup>75</sup>*Pictou Standard* quoted in the weekly *Newfoundlander*, 3 January 1882.

<sup>76</sup>During this period of partisan debate on the railway about a dozen newspapers were in circulation. All but the *Evening Telegram* were supportive. The *Morning Chronicle* was opposed at the start but supported the railway in 1881.

<sup>77</sup>The Short Line Railway received much attention not only in the St. John's press, but also the newspapers of Halifax and Saint John. The quotation above is from an editorial in the *Saint John, New Brunswick News*, carried in the St. John's *Evening Mercury* 5 September 1882.

coast of Ireland and there connecting by channel steamer with the London trains. At one point the newspaper discussion included the fantastical idea of putting the locomotive on board the steamer between Cape North and Cape Ray, so that passengers would not be disturbed. *The Evening Telegram* reported that the American company had asked the Newfoundland government for \$3,000,000 in "secure bonds" as well as a land grant of a million and a quarter acres either side of the line.<sup>78</sup>

Newspapers were essential for the promotion of such schemes. For example, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, James Whitman, agent for the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, was hired to "inspire, if not actually write" stories in local newspapers favourable to railway development, which he did successfully.<sup>79</sup> In Ontario, the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* declared that railways were a sign of civilization in any country, while in Montreal, *LeMonde* supported government aid to railway promoters.<sup>80</sup> In his study of technological development in Western Canada, A.A. den Otter also made the point that newspaper publishers were either part of, or

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<sup>78</sup>A line to Harbour Grace, a distance of about 45 miles, was all that was accomplished before the American company became insolvent. See Appendix 4, no. 2, 334. New arrangements were made several years later with the subsequent developers, the Reids.

<sup>79</sup>Sig Mickelson, *The Northern Pacific Railroad and the selling of the West: a nineteenth-century public relations venture* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Centre for Western Studies, 1993), 15, 19.

<sup>80</sup>*Citizen*, 11 January 1878; *LeMonde*, 24 March 1896, cited in Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority*, 210.

catered to political power and the business of railroad building.<sup>81</sup> Sig Mickelson also noted that John Loomis, a land grant negotiator, made friends with the press and enlisted the support of professional and public men, as well as benevolent and religious societies.<sup>82</sup> Just as Loomis advertised summer excursions at reduced rates in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as a promotional gimmick, in Newfoundland, the *Evening Mercury* advertised free excursions at the "personal invitation of Mr. Blackman."<sup>83</sup> The *Evening Telegram* portrayed Loomis as a colleague of Blackman in negotiating land grants in Newfoundland, and described how, in 1882 they had visited the Speaker's room in the House of Assembly at the invitation of Premier Whiteway and then Speaker, A.J.W. McNeily. Suspicious the two were trying to bilk the government, McNeily let his feelings be known.<sup>84</sup> An argument ensued and Blackman threatened to "clean out" McNeily, who in turn, laid charges. Blackman was bound over by Judge Prowse to keep the peace on a \$500 bond. Prowse had earlier dismissed a charge of libel filed by Blackman's company against the *Evening Telegram*, with a claim of \$5,000 in damages for suggesting that the company was not holding to the

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<sup>81</sup>A.A. den Otter, *Civilizing the West: The Galts and the development of Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982).

<sup>82</sup>Mickelson, *The Northern Pacific Railroad*, 9.

<sup>83</sup>No direct connection was determined between either Blackman or Loomis and editor Harvey to show he could have been an agent for the syndicate. It may be worth noting, however, that Charles Harvey, a son, was one of the original surveyors on the line.

<sup>84</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 3 May 1882.

terms of the contract. This was Blackman's third encounter with the Newfoundland court and his second \$500 bond in as many weeks. It made for captivating newspaper reading.

Whether Blackman had simply had enough, or whether he knew he could not carry out the grandiose scheme he had promoted with the help of the *Mercury*, is not clear. On 6 May 1882 he left Newfoundland, writing later from New York to announce his resignation from the Newfoundland Railway Company. The *Mercury* ensured that Blackman did not leave Newfoundland in disgrace and published more than a full page account of a dinner held in his honour, attended by more than three hundred people. As Blackman boarded the *Hibernia*, Whiteway delivered a parting eulogy on the quarterdeck, published in the *Mercury* along with a list of about 170 names pledging support to Blackman. In his editorial, Harvey said the petition had been "hastily drawn up" and, with more time, would have had "hundreds more names." Nor did Blackman's name fade quickly from the pages of the *Mercury* or the *Telegram*. His dealings with the Dominion government on building rail lines in Nova Scotia, along with his correspondence with Charles Tupper, continued to be monitored in both newspapers.

#### 8.10 "Industrialized Consciousness" Tempered by Partisan Politics

The railway discussion began as science and technology were transforming the world but quickly became a partisan political debate. For that reason alone, it was of

paramount importance to newspaper editors and publishers, who were themselves politically engaged and aligned along party lines. Political parties and their leaders utilized the newspapers, increasingly so the daily newspapers, as "tools for governing." The act of publicizing, of creating a public record that could be referred to time and again, made the daily newspaper a useful, if not indispensable political instrument. Political principles, however, were prone to change. The trade in words of the most vindictive nature was often forgotten in the trade of political loyalties among "party organs" that were anything but unified or homogenous. In an analysis of present-day American journalism, Timothy Cook has suggested the great advantage of a partisan press was that it mobilized the electorate.<sup>85</sup> But a partisan press was not above switching political loyalties when it suited its purpose or the personal ambitions of editors. This was certainly the case with A. A. Parsons, and raises the question as to whether a partisan press mobilized only an elite electorate, and kept most average voters in a general state of confusion.

After 1882, Parsons frequently attacked Whiteway and his "policy of progress."

His editorial assaults were both professional and personal:

... a poor, penniless Devonshire boy lifted [by the merchants] out of the obscurity to which he *belonged* ... stuck to him, notwithstanding his stupid, blundering disposition, until they finally made him what he is today -- Premier and Attorney General and a 'knight of the blue string' to boot ... undeserving, presumptuous, and ignorant; a subservient and temporizing political tool ... who 'blows his own pipe' through the

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<sup>85</sup>Timothy Cook, *Governing With The News: The News Media As A Political Institution*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 190.



columns of the party organ [the *Evening Mercury*].<sup>86</sup>

Parsons felt no compunction at including others in his editorial offensive. Methodists, he claimed, despised the premier, and Sir Ambrose Shea, "unless 'tis made worth his while to keep a still tongue," could tell how he despised " 'that numbskull Whiteway' " as he calls him." Shea was also said to have referred to Whiteway as an "unprincipled and unscrupulous blockhead -- more like a dishonest banker ... than a ... veracious party-leader."<sup>87</sup> But in a few short years, A.A. Parsons had joined the Whiteway fold, having relinquished his control over editorial policy to party leaders.

In 1883, Moses Harvey had stepped aside in favour of Albert B. Morine, a lawyer and journalist from Nova Scotia, who took over as editor of the *Mercury*. Later, in a letter to Whiteway, Harvey said he did it because he was tired of the political battle and believed that Morine could "aid [their] cause."<sup>88</sup> However, Morine and the publisher, J.E.A. Furneaux, had different political views which led to Morine leaving the *Mercury* in 1885.<sup>89</sup> Harvey claimed he was drawn back into the editorial work of the newspaper to keep it from "going to the wall," intimating that Morine had

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<sup>86</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 8 October 1884.

<sup>87</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 8 October 1884.

<sup>88</sup>Personal correspondence (1 January 1886) from Moses Harvey to William Whiteway, marked "Private." See Robert Bond Collection, 237, Box 6, File 3.05.004, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

<sup>89</sup>Harvey to Whiteway, Robert Bond Collection, 237, Box 6, File 3.05.004, CNS Archive.

gained the paper more than a few enemies, and that Whiteway was "the only man living" for whom he (Harvey) would take it on again.<sup>90</sup> He told Whiteway he wished to "live quietly" in his old age,<sup>91</sup> yet he remained connected with the *Mercury* until the 1890s.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile Whiteway had resigned from office in 1885, and the Reform Party under Robert Thorburn was, in the opinion of the editor of the *Telegram*, "even more unscrupulous than his predecessor."<sup>93</sup> Parsons's dissatisfaction had much to do with his failure to obtain lucrative government printing contracts, a bitterness he expressed against A.J.W. McNeily, who, Parsons claimed, was then co-editor with Harvey at the *Mercury*.<sup>94</sup> When the Reform Party was defeated, its members re-emerged as the Patriotic Association, which in its turn, drew harsh criticism in the *Telegram*, while gaining the support of the re-named *Mercury* -- the *Evening Herald*. Such was the political entanglement of the new daily press that switching party allegiances became

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<sup>90</sup>Harvey correspondence, Robert Bond Collection, 237, Box 6, File 3.05.004, CNS Archive.

<sup>91</sup>Harvey correspondence, Robert Bond Collection, 237, Box 6, File 3.05.004, CNS Archive.

<sup>92</sup>Harvey published several "valedictories" which Parsons made sport of in the *Telegram*, refusing in 1890 to acknowledge another resignation by Harvey. See *Evening Telegram*, 31 March 1890.

<sup>93</sup>The political history of this period involving Catholic members of the party in power, and amalgamation with the Protestant Reform Party, comprised mainly of members of the Orange Order, is well documented in the literature and beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>94</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 12 March 1886; 27 July 1886; 29 July 1886.

commonplace.

8.11

#### Hidden Agendas: Editors as Politicians

In 1888, A.A. Parsons made an about-turn. In February of that year, he visited Whiteway's residence where he was invited to discuss forming an opposition to the current party in power.<sup>95</sup> Robert Bond, who was also present, reported that Parsons had "kindly offered to place his paper at the disposal of the [opposition] party,"<sup>96</sup> and several days later Parsons confirmed his willingness to do so, "provided that when the Party came to power his paper would receive such patronage as the Party could legitimately bestow..."<sup>97</sup> If he could have such assurance, Parsons offered to refer "all editorials relating to finance and policy to a committee appointed by the Party" prior to publication. His offer was accepted. Whiteway and Bond would "supervise the editorial matter in the Party newspaper" until a committee was appointed to do the

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<sup>95</sup>Robert Bond Collection, 237, "Whiteway Party Minute Book, 1888-89" Minutes of meeting 13 February 1888, File 3.07.004, CNS Archive.

<sup>96</sup>Robert Bond Collection, 237, "Whiteway Party Minute Book, 1888-89" Minutes of meeting 13 February 1888, File 3.07.004. Also present at the meeting were A. B. Morine, R.J. Parsons, a lawyer, and son of the late R.J. Parsons of the *Patriot* newspaper, and [?] Murphy, described as "connected with the *Colonist*" newspaper. Murphy later agreed to sever his ties with the *Colonist*. Morine later broke with the party over the issue of Confederation, for which he was labelled "Charles Tupper's Agent."

<sup>97</sup>Robert Bond Collection, File 3.07.004 "Whiteway Minute Book" minutes of meeting 17 February 1888, CNS Archive.

job.<sup>98</sup> No reference is made in the minutes of the private meetings to W.J. Herder, owner and publisher of the *Telegram*, who presumably concurred with the editorial change.

A. A. Parsons and the *Telegram* remained faithful to Whiteway (returned as Liberal Premier in 1889) and Bond. Less than four years later, in 1893, Parsons received the Liberal nomination for the district of White Bay - St. Barbe and was elected.<sup>99</sup> He received a congratulatory note from Bond to which he replied:

... I shall always remember with grateful feelings the interest you take in my public welfare; nor am I unconscious of the fact that I owe the seat to which I have just been elected almost entirely to you.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, committed to Bond for the foreseeable future, not only as a politician, but also as newspaper editor, Parsons said, " ... whatever course you decide to pursue in this aspect shall have my hearty approval and support, both in the press and on the floor of the Assembly."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Robert Bond Collection, File 3.07.004 "Whiteway Minute Book" minutes of meeting 17 February 1888, CNS Archive.

<sup>99</sup>A letter to Bond from J. Lynch, one of the party faithful in Conche, confirmed the nomination of Parsons, saying that the "cordial reception afforded Parsons in the northern district was only a small return for past kindnesses received from you." See Bond Collection, File 3.12.010, CNS Archive.

<sup>100</sup>Parsons to Bond, Robert Bond Collection, File 3.12.010, CNS Archive.

<sup>101</sup>Robert Bond Collection. Other private correspondence connected not only Whiteway and Bond, but also E.P. Morris, with A.A. Parsons in the use of the *Evening Telegram* in 1896 for direct political strikes against opponents. See Robert Bond Collection, File 3.15.002, CNS Archive.

Partisan politics were prone to shifting loyalties; editors' claims to "independence" did not negatively affect their openly biased views. But readers were not told everything; Parsons's offer to Bond and the party was a private affair, not made public in the columns of the *Telegram* (or elsewhere). Nor was Parsons's letter (above) to Bond ever published in the *Evening Telegram*. Yet a "Letter From Mr. Bond" condemning A.B. Morine as "Sir Charles Tupper's Agent" in Newfoundland,<sup>102</sup> occupying almost a full page of the *Telegram*, divulged details of private meetings among numerous named politicians, while avoiding mention of the fact that Parsons was present and involved in the same discussions.<sup>103</sup>

The inference by Timothy Cook, noted earlier, that a so-called transparent political bias was somehow beneficial, is open to debate. The political allegiance of the newspapers of nineteenth-century Newfoundland was, for the most part, open to public scrutiny, a cultivated, culturally accepted fact. Jabez Thompson, who also promoted both Whiteway and Robert Bond, relinquished his seat in the legislature to Bond in 1895, yet insisted the *Twillingate Sun* was not "wedded to the policy of any political party."<sup>104</sup> However, the public relationship between the press and politics was not always so transparent. The private correspondence between Harvey and Whiteway,

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<sup>102</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 22 November 1888.

<sup>103</sup>See Robert Bond Collection, File 3.07.004 "Whiteway Minute Book 1888-89," CNS Archive.

<sup>104</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, 26 February 1890, following the by-election won by Whiteway and Bond at Trinity.

and between Parsons and Bond clearly shows a deliberately concealed private agenda in which the *Evening Mercury* (later re-named *Evening Herald*) and the *Evening Telegram* were, to use Cook's phrase, "instruments of the ruling establishment." The involvement of A.J.W. McNeily and his brother, Robert McNeily with the *Evening Herald*, though revealed only through the *Telegram*, was not denied, and shows further the use by politicians of newspapers as political tools and willing compliant editors who were essential to achieving their goals.

A.B. Morine's role as politician as well as legal counsel for Robert G. Reid in negotiating a new railway contract with the Newfoundland Government is well documented.<sup>105</sup> The debate about the Reid railway contract continued for more than a decade, and in 1898 developed into what has been described as a "battle in the press."<sup>106</sup> It was simply more of the same partisan politics played out in the pages of the opposing "party organs." The railway negotiations had survived seven changes in government from 1882 to the end of the century, with much shifting of party support, and with the issue of confederation always lurking. A.A. Parsons and the *Telegram* stayed faithful to Bond who remained hostile to Morine. Collaborating with James. S. Winter, a relationship going back to at least 1888, Morine was instrumental in bringing

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<sup>105</sup>See: Hiller, *A History of Newfoundland*, 155-161; Hiller, "The Railway and Local Politics." See also R.H.E. Cuff, "Moline", *Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1990) 231-233.

<sup>106</sup>Gavin May, "A battle in the press: the Reid contract dispute of 1898," (Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982).

about victory for the Conservatives in 1897, making Winter prime minister. It was under his administration, with Morine as Minister of Finance, that a new railway contract was signed in the spring of 1898.

The newspaper battle amounted to the *Telegram* printing every speech of Bond decrying the "sellout" to Reid,<sup>107</sup> and the *Evening Herald*, with Furneaux still proprietor, and P.T. McGrath then editor, supporting Winter, Morine, and Reid. It was a mere war of words which subsided within two weeks. Letters to the editor of the *Telegram* accusing the Reids of mistreating workers were ridiculed in the *Herald* as fake correspondence, which, McGrath said, Parsons had concocted himself.<sup>108</sup> The railway was less of an issue once the contract was ratified, and less important as mining in Notre Dame Bay diminished at the end of the century. Editors could only lament the "backward trend" of Newfoundland. Trade stagnated; the prospects for the staple cod fishery looked poor; herring was not doing well in foreign markets and the seal fishery was falling off -- "becoming a thing of the past." Mineral and agricultural lands remained undeveloped, "waiting for capital to call them into life."<sup>109</sup> The newspaper industry had not gained much either. The railway debate that had sustained

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<sup>107</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 1 March 1898.

<sup>108</sup>*Evening Herald*, 8 March 1898.

<sup>109</sup>*Times*, 16 June 1886.

the daily press for more than a decade had finally petered out.<sup>110</sup>

## 8.12

## Conclusion

Science and technology transformed the world in the nineteenth century. By 1861, the telegraph and rail lines together served most of the United States, and within the same decade the telegraph had brought almost all of the United States, and most of Great Britain and Europe into direct communication.<sup>111</sup> But the costly telegraph did not always work, and when it did, it did not deliver the volume of news brought by steamer.<sup>112</sup> Until ocean cable service became relatively reliable in the 1860s, news from Europe took about two weeks to arrive in America. Even during the 1860s, great dissatisfaction was expressed with "newspaper-telegraph interface."<sup>113</sup> It took time to sort out the relationship between newspapers and telegraphy as editors fought to keep

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<sup>110</sup>The *Daily News*, new to the market since 1894, had positioned itself as strictly a City paper, devoted mainly to St. John's municipal affairs. Its editor, Walter March, in 1898, had little need to enter into the railway contract debate. March was replaced as editor of the *Daily News* at the end of 1898 by H.Y. Mott, also involved in politics. March and J.A. Barrett, former publisher of the *Trinity Record*, were later connected with Morine and Reid in establishing the *Western Star* in 1900. See: A.L. Barrett, *Golden Anniversary of the Western Star 1900-1950* (Curling, NF. 1950). A.L. Barrett was J.A. Barrett's son.

<sup>111</sup>Robert Desmond, *The Information Process: World Reporting to the 20th Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1978) 103-110.

<sup>112</sup>For example, the weekly *Patriot* reported 24 April 1882, that the mail boat, *Newfoundland*, arrived from Halifax with, among other things, 30 cwt. of newspapers.

<sup>113</sup>Schwarzlose, *The Nation's NewsBrokers*, 74.



control of "news" messages.<sup>114</sup> This "tug-of-war" described by Schwarzlose, was between the largest American city newspapers and telegraph proprietors. It continued to the 1880s, when, through co-operative newsbrokering, publishers could withstand the cost of wire news controlled by major private companies.

Such strategies were an improbable challenge in small, remote markets such as Newfoundland. Despite the new technologies, the telegraph made no difference to the way the local press operated; it was mainly a world event, its progress important and exciting to write about. The same was true of the railway, except that the swirling political debate it generated locally had a direct influence in the rise of a competitive daily press in St. John's. The original railway contract, as a politically partisan issue, played a significant role in the start of a vibrant daily newspaper press, but without an opposition paper as financially stable as the *Evening Telegram*, a daily press may not have taken such a firm hold in a market that had not expanded much beyond the business and official elite of the Avalon Peninsula. The subsequent railway contract with R.G. Reid, and its various amendments, helped sustain a daily newspaper debate to the end of the century. At no time, in the debate about the industrial advantages of a railway, did newspaper editors include among those advantages, expansion of a newspaper industry.

The only striking difference in the newspapers of the last half of the century compared to the first half, was their appearance due to modernizing advances in

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<sup>114</sup>Schwarzlose, *The Nation's NewsBrokers*, 76.

printing machines. Larger sheets, wider columns, clean, uncluttered type, and photo engraving made for an attractive product in which publishers took great pride. These innovations made newspapers far more aesthetic and entertaining, adding to their value to advertisers, who could then have their products illustrated, hence the newspapers' commercial success. Political partisanship was no less important to the survival of individual papers; it had become even more blatant, with the most successful papers almost thoroughly under political direction. Newspapers in the last half of the century, like those in the first half, continued to be identifiable by the religious beliefs, practices, and moral customs of their owners and editors. Journalism in Newfoundland remained a personal as well as a public occupation to the end of the century.

Although advertising increasingly became the mainstay of the newspaper business, what is significant about the endurance of the *Telegram*, the *Mercury/Herald*, and the *Sun*, was their individual ties to politics and religion, two distinct characteristics that had always marked Newfoundland society and culture. The press had exhibited these partisan and denominational traits throughout the century and continued to be instrumental in shaping the society in that way. The new technologies introduced ideas of modernity, and by the 1880s brought some changes, but in a slow and limited fashion, serving mainly to accentuate Newfoundland's marginal position in the world.

When A.A.Parsons retired as editor of the *Evening Telegram* in 1903, like so many editors before him, he was recognized and rewarded for his years of 'service' to political causes. Looking back over the previous 25 years of the century, he claimed that "members of the 'fourth estate' in Newfoundland seldom allow[ed] political prejudices to interfere with social relationships." Despite some "hard things" said on both sides in the heat of the contest, Parsons believed there was an "absence of vindictiveness."<sup>1</sup> The Liberal minister of finance [Edward M. Jackman], who was present on the occasion of the editor's retirement, said that Parsons and the *Telegram* had contributed to the "steady progress" of the country, and that his appointment as superintendent of the penitentiary in St. John's was his "reward of faithful party service."<sup>2</sup> What more could describe the kind of journalism and the function of the press, which, toward the end of the nineteenth-century in Newfoundland, had become almost entirely political?

This thesis was shaped by predominant themes that emerged from reading through seven decades of a selection of weekly newspapers, and examining portions of the daily press of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It does not claim to be either definitive or exhaustive; merely a modest start to a conceptual framework for

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<sup>1</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 31 December 1903.

<sup>2</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 31 December 1903.

further work.

From a licensed press under threat of censorship in the first decade of the century, to a later unlicensed, though somewhat restricted press under the laws of libel, to a sponsored and subsidized press, changes over time were gradual and consensual. The shift to a thoroughly partisan political press in mid-century followed an almost universal pattern. Insistent claims made for freedom and independence were important and necessary to maintain the right to free speech and expression, but in reality, newspaper publishers and editors in Newfoundland enjoyed relatively free reign and used it to their advantage, assuming an authority for the press similar to that of government and religion. An elite institution, the press also served church, mercantile, and party interests. Looking through nineteenth-century Newfoundland newspapers, it is important to keep in mind that 'partisan' was not necessarily a derogatory term; partisanship was characteristic of a style of political journalism that could only be described as personal. Editors sometimes castigated each other for accepting the favour of one political party or another, but usually only out of a sense of injustice, or jealousy. Customarily, editors claimed not only a right, but an obligation to make personal political choices, and to support them and promote them publicly in print as a "badge of belonging."<sup>3</sup>

The partisan nature of religious belief and practice was also clearly present in the press; newspapers were identified by the personal religious leanings of editors and

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<sup>3</sup>Jones, *Powers of the Press*, 141.

publishers. Religion and politics were foremost in the consciousness of those who controlled the press and wished to persuade others to their way of thinking. Almost all of the newspapers' editorial contents, including letters to the editor, were influenced by these precepts. It is striking that the majority of newspaper editors and publishers were evangelical Christians, whose beliefs were evident in their journalism of social and moral reform. On balance, Christianity, in whatever form, Protestant or Roman Catholic, figured prominently in the makeup and presentation of almost all the newspapers examined.

Episodes of sectarian tensions erupted for reasons pertinent to a society in its various stages of social, political, and economic growth, factors which, along with geographic limitations, affected press development. The island of Newfoundland known for its expansive wilderness and harsh weather, had few roads, especially in the first half of the century. Transportation was mainly by boat for a widely dispersed people in numerous settlements of low population. A concentration of people on the Avalon Peninsula where government resided, and where the press operated for most of the century, confined, but did not ensure a large newspaper market.

The issues that preoccupied those newspaper editors from the 1830s to the end of the century, dictated the themes that emerged during the infancy of the press through its adolescence and maturity providing some understanding of the institutional role the press played in shaping Newfoundland society. Those themes of religion, temperance, poverty, politics, and technology were explored in individual chapters in

order to narrow the focus of a field of historical study that is difficult to periodize, complex in its relationships, and virtually impossible to encompass in all its variety in a single inquiry.

Religion and morality pervaded every aspect of life in the Victorian era. Although various denominations professed principles of peace and harmony under the umbrella of Christianity, sectarian divisiveness was deeply and historically rooted in fear that one or another would gain ascendancy as a governing force. The political nature of this fear was expressed nowhere more vigorously than in the newspapers, whose owners and editors were personally caught up in the struggle that was concentrated in the early and middle years but lasted to some degree throughout the century. That kind of blatant religious bias is in stark contrast to present day requirements for a secular press that is leery of religion and purports to be deliberately non-partisan.

The issues of religion and temperance were closely connected but required separate attention because the issue of temperance swelled into a movement of public proportion involving persons of all walks of life and religious persuasions. Although the issue of temperance was more heavily weighted in the decades of the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, it continued as a public concern and a matter of newspaper discourse, due to the personal involvement of newspaper editors in the movement, to the end of the century. Representative images of intemperance in the newspapers almost always depicted the 'rabble' of society somewhere frozen in a snow bank, or receiving a

lecture from a court magistrate on moral reform. Intemperance among professional men or the merchant class, though alluded to, seldom, if ever was noted in court reports. Temperance also inserted itself into political campaigns to some extent, casting its net for votes, especially in remote rural areas where the movement was strong. Nevertheless, press support for temperance was dramatically conspicuous, brought people together, and helped to change attitudes.

On the question of poverty, the press was less emphatic, ambiguous, and contradictory. Poverty was portrayed as endemic, side by side with relative affluence of the "propertied class" comprised mainly of government officials, judiciary, politicians, doctors, merchants, and newspaper owners and editors. The bulk of the population did not own much in the way of property, and relied solely on family labour and merchant credit in the fishery. The poor among them were therefore a 'problem' to be solved; a target of charitable organizations; a divisive social classification of deserving and undeserving requiring a bureaucratic agency to monitor and administer relief. Poverty was an "issue" debated in the local legislature, and reported and discussed in the newspapers to the end of the century.<sup>4</sup> Fear of depleting government coffers, along with the inability to develop resources, placed most of the moral responsibility for the poor on the poor and on charity. Destitution, starvation,

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<sup>4</sup>For example, not until the twentieth century was the elimination of taxes on "the principal articles of the poor man's consumption," namely, molasses, flour, kerosene oil, salt, lines and twines, a possibility. See the campaign broadsheet published by Robert Bond 17 April 1909, Robert Bond Papers, Collection 237, CNS Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

and unemployment were emotional topics, rife with unending rhetoric in editorials and letters to the editor, creating a perception that the poor were responsible for their own inadequacies, similar to that which connected intemperance and self-help ideology. A culture of poverty alongside a culture of charity, prevalent in Victorian society, was nourished in the newspapers, cultivating attitudes and leaving lasting images of the poor. Such publicity was extremely useful to religious, temperance, and government leaders who shunted the poor into the refuge of Christian charity.

As Cook has observed of publicity in today's world, so it was then, a "crucial tool of governance."<sup>5</sup> Prior to the establishment of a local legislature in 1832, administrators begrudgingly accepted the newspaper as a useful thing to communicate proclamations, and regulations for trade and commerce. Once local government was installed, the utility of newspapers became even more apparent to those in power as it did to printers and publishers. The threat of government encroachment soon dissipated after 1832, as political parties evolved, and politicians quickly made alliances with newspaper publishers and editors. Relationships changed as editors moved on or were replaced, affecting the policy and 'personality' of a newspaper. The impetus of a local legislature launched several newspapers whose publishers saw themselves as participants in the governing process. The relationships forged between party and paper were important to the promotion of each.

The rivalry of opposing political camps served to expand the growth of

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<sup>5</sup>Cook, *Governing With the News*, 191.



newspapers as forums of debate and wielders of power. What kind of power, and to what effect was questionable, as the issue of Confederation showed. C.F. Bennett's *Morning Chronicle* undoubtedly reached an articulate elite in the 1869 debate waged mainly against the Sheas' *Newfoundlander*. But whether the newspaper press had widespread influence in political debate is doubtful; fishermen had little time for or interest in reading newspapers. Politics that required the working man's vote depended on the personal handshake, the town hall meeting, and the fiery platform speech. Party loyalties were tenuous at best as personal ambitions of politicians and journalists dictated political strategies. Yet, taken together, newspapers were a political, intellectual, and moral force, guided by men who professed to be Christian, politically active journalists, and, in many cases, active politicians.

As a defender of social order, the press exercised its freedom, even if somewhat restrained, to express opinions, to criticize both church and state, and to open its columns to readers, and non-readers for the same advantage. How authentic were the views expressed is left to question, since only the editor was privy to the identity of authorship. Nevertheless, given the small size of the market, and the apparent inclusiveness of the readership, it is likely that subscribers, if they cared, knew most of the sources of anonymous contributions. As well, the variety of individual newspapers in circulation at any given time provided sufficient opportunity for rebuttal and debate.

However, in the last half of the century, despite its overt support for the arrival

of the telegraph and the locomotive, which, in most of the rest of the commercial world saw immediate growth and increased circulation of newspapers, the press in Newfoundland was virtually silent on its own behalf. Privatized from its inception in 1854, the telegraph was strictly controlled, and expensive to use. Concerned mainly with long-distance communication, local connections were decades in completion, all of which inhibited use by local newspaper publishers. The railway got underway so late in the century as to have little bearing on everyday life before the end of the century.<sup>6</sup> Though it was hailed by the daily newspapers as the harbinger of resource development, a topic that provided years of editorial debate, there was virtually no discussion of the potential a railway might have for newspaper expansion and distribution. Newspaper publishers on the Avalon Peninsula showed little interest in expansion to widely scattered outport communities, one reason for which may be seen in the census reports. Between 1869 and 1891, even the population of St. John's had increased only slightly from about 30,000 to 36,000.<sup>7</sup>

Nor did literacy rates encourage publishers to expand. The 1884 census published in 1886 (the first since 1874), reported large numbers of children still not attending school despite the fact that every settlement of 25 families or more then had a school "in reach." Improvement was noted over previous years, but the editor of the

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<sup>6</sup>See Appendix 4, nos. 3, 4, and 5, 335-337.

<sup>7</sup>*Census and Return of the Population of Newfoundland, 1869 and 1891, Journals of the House of Assembly.*

*Twillingate Sun* concluded that "... many do not value the privilege afforded and allow their children to grow up in ignorance."<sup>8</sup> Neither the census report, nor the *Sun* editorial discussed the likelihood that children were engaged in the fishery, or the conditions in which the people lived, or whether they had adequate food and clothing to allow them to take advantage of the schooling provided.

Yet, despite the gloomy conclusions of the *Twillingate* editor regarding the census report, and despite the increase in the percentage of children not attending school, the number of people reportedly able to read and write in 1884 had almost tripled in a ten-year period. No rationale was offered for the dramatic change; and only a slight increase in the total population was noted. Far more were engaged in non-professional trades, and their numbers increased more than in the professions. One possible explanation for a higher literacy rate might be the increase in the numbers of people listed in religious denominations who may have learned to read the Bible, or other religious literature. It was sometimes claimed (without evidence), that newspapers helped people learn to read. Given the success enjoyed by the *Twillingate Sun* in what the editor described as an isolated and disadvantaged area of the island, the claim cannot be entirely discounted. It may be worth noting that calcium burners, that gave a "perfectly white light" of 60 candle power were available in Newfoundland

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<sup>8</sup>Editorial, *Twillingate Sun*, , 30 October 1886.

in the late 1880s, which could also account for a greater interest in reading.<sup>9</sup>

The *Twillingate Sun* proved that a newspaper could be produced, and thrive, in a remote area of Newfoundland, though it was clearly a late-century response at a time when Twillingate was the centre of capital investment in mineral resources, an influx of wage labour and business, and heightened political attention. In style and content, the *Sun* followed the same pattern as the St. John's newspapers, except that it kept a 'civil tongue.' This was due to the *Sun's* founder and editor, Jabez P. Thompson, who set a steadfast conciliatory tone imbued with religious moral fervour that in no way hampered his personal political aspirations, and may have been much of the reason for its success. Religion and politics were, after all, the mainstay of journalism in Newfoundland, as they were for the whole of the society.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, 11 newspapers were in circulation. By the end of the century there were eight -- five in St. John's, one in Twillingate, one in Harbour Grace, and for a short time, one in Brigus.<sup>10</sup> The *Harbour Grace Standard* had a strong presence in Conception Bay from 1859 to 1936 when it

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<sup>9</sup>The Hickok Calcium Lamp was advertised in the *Twillingate Sun* and reported "large sales." See *Twillingate Sun*, 1 January 1887.

<sup>10</sup>The *Vindicator and Brigus Reporter* started in 1898 and ceased in 1903. Jabez P. Thompson, *Twillingate Sun* founder, started the *Vindicator* in Brigus shortly after he was appointed magistrate there -- a political favour for giving up his seat in the legislature to Robert Bond in 1895.

ceased publication.<sup>11</sup> The *Twillingate Sun* published in Notre Dame Bay from 1880 to 1953. Of the five newspapers in St. John's, two were weekly: the *Royal Gazette*, the first newspaper published in Newfoundland, a quasi-government publication,<sup>12</sup> and the *Newfoundland Trade Review*, started in 1892 strictly as a commercial and literary journal. The three remaining newspapers were the popular dailies, the *Evening Herald* (1882-1920), *Daily News* (1894-1984), and *Evening Telegram* (1879- ).<sup>13</sup> The large number of newspapers published in the early decades had gradually ceased. By 1884, all of the old guard had gone. The *Patriot* and the *Times* continued to 1890 and 1895 respectively, but were far less influential under the direction of Charles F. Parsons and John W. McCoubrey Jr.

Nothing in 1879 had indicated a public demand for daily newspapers. W.H. Herder's venture seemed to be a brave risk which he believed would work. With all of the old warriors gone, it was probably not difficult to capture a market they had deliberately divided by staggering publication days in order to get their small share. Competition from two new dailies was offset by political patronage which each one enjoyed. In the new modern era of the 1880s and 1890s, with better printing machines,

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<sup>11</sup>Between 1859 and 1899, complete runs of the *Harbour Grace Standard* are available for only eight years. Only a few issues of the last 40 years, 1898-1936 are extant.

<sup>12</sup>The *Royal Gazette* continued to be semi-official until 1924 when it was re-named the *Newfoundland Gazette*, and became the official publication for government notices.

<sup>13</sup>The *Evening Telegram* was re-named the *Telegram* in 2001.

illustration, and photoengraving, the role of newspapers as advertising media for brand-name manufacturers, importers and retailers, was also relatively secure.

When the *Telegram* moved in 1882 from the old *Courier* building on Duckworth Street to its larger premises on the Carwithen estate in Gregory's Lane off Water Street, the newspaper was being printed on some of the latest press equipment available, driven by gas engine, according to its editor, A.A. Parsons. Newswriters were housed in a well lighted, heated, and ventilated spacious composing room. Parsons was especially proud of the artistic layout and engraved illustrations of the "Christmas numbers" which were sent abroad to display Newfoundland's resources and "scenic charm."<sup>14</sup>

After 15 years of daily publication, Parsons took some credit for himself and his newspaper for the Ballot Act and manhood suffrage, seeing both as great achievements of "liberty for the people."<sup>15</sup> But essentially, he saw the newspaper as a "manufacturing industry," producing a new product every day, each day different from the day before, and requiring executive business competence. His predictions for the future suggested newspapers would get continually more expensive to produce and to purchase; that there could not be more news, only news more carefully selected, told better and more briefly. The journalist of the future, he said, would have to have an independent mind, and a courage that "quails before no man and no party." Party

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<sup>14</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1895.

<sup>15</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 27 July 1895.

journalism, however, had been the standard practice, and more blatant in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

The position of newspapers in a community underlines the significance of localism in developing institutions, the *Twillingate Sun* being a case in point. The geographical concentration of the press in the main centre of commerce and trade -- the Avalon Peninsula -- seems to have had much to do with the differentiation, even social separation between that area and the rest of the island and Labrador. That is only one of many questions that might be explored further in future examinations of the history of journalism in Newfoundland.

Newfoundland journalism is a field of historical significance that fits naturally with, and contributes to almost every other aspect of Newfoundland history. Newfoundland historians have recognized newspapers as an important source of information about religion, politics, education, and the fishery. Their work shows that the newspapers afford an invaluable record of local history. Until now these newspapers have been neglected for their own history. Missing is an analysis of the pervasive influence of the local press in the historical process. This thesis is important and necessary because it begins to correct the anomaly.

# Public Ledger

1820 - 1882

Henry David Winton  
1820 - 1855

Alexander Hairs Printer  
1820 - 1823

Henry D. Winton (died 1855)  
Robert Winton 1849 - ?

Robert Winton, asst. Ed.  
North Adams with Transcriber  
North Adams, Mass. (1850s)

Robert Winton  
St. John's Daily News  
1849 - 1850

Robert & Francis Winton (1850-61)  
St. John's Daily News and Journal of Commerce  
1861 - 1870

Robert Winton

North Star & St. John's Daily News  
1872-1873

North Star & St. John's Daily News  
1873-1881

Francis Winton

Day Book 1862-1865

Morning Chronicle/Chronicle

C.F. Bennett, owner

Francis Winton, Editor  
1865-1881

Henry Winton Jr.  
Banner of Temperance  
1851  
Daily Sessional 1861  
Not extant

Ebenezer Winton ?  
Morning Advertiser & Shipping Gazette  
1844-1845

Henry Winton Jr., Editor  
1855-57

Proprietor/Editor  
1857-1866

Died 1866

Widow, Elizabeth B. Winton

Proprietor, 1866-1869

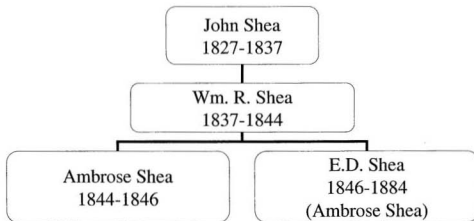
Died 1869

Adam Scott, Editor  
1866-1869

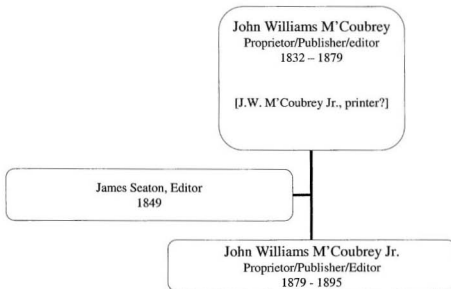
F.W. Bowden  
New Owner/Editor  
1869-1882



*Newfoundlander*  
1827 - 1884

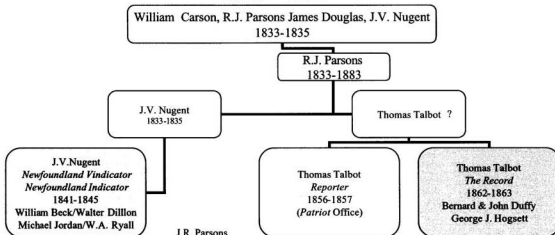


*Times and General Commercial Gazette*  
1832 -1895



# *Patriot*

1833 – 1890



J.R. Parsons  
(R.J. Parsons's son)  
Reporter Printer 1856-1857  
Patriot Printer 1863-1864

Charles Flood Parsons  
(R.J. Parsons's son)  
Patriot Publisher 1883-1890 for  
Mary Ann Parsons & Emma Parsons  
(R.J. Parsons's spinster daughters)

# *Courier* 1844 - 1878

William Beck  
Printer/Publisher  
1844-45  
[Vindicator 1841-43]



Stephen Daniel, Editor  
1844 - 1846  
Proprietor, 1845-46  
[Richard Daley, printer/publisher  
1845-46]



Joseph Woods  
Publisher 1846 - 1850  
Proprietor/Publisher  
1850 - 1871  
[Died 1871]

Joseph Woods & W.J. Ward  
Morning Post  
1843 - 1845



James Scaton, Editor  
1846 - 1849



John Little, Editor ?  
1849



James Scaton, Editor  
Times 1849  
Newfoundland Express  
1851 - 1856

John Woods  
Proprietor/Publisher  
1871 - 1878

*Telegraph and Political Review*

(St. John's) 1856 – 1875

John Thomas Burton, Proprietor, Printer, Publisher, and Editor

*Comet* (St. John's)

1869

[NF] *Express*

J.T.Burton, Publisher/Printer

1851-1866

*Star and Conception Bay Journal*

Carbonear 1833 -1840

With D.E. Gilmour 1833-1834

*Star and Newfoundland Advocate*

St. John's 1840 - 1847

James Seaton, Editor

1851-1866

*Weekly Express* 1858-59

James Seaton, Owner/Editor

(Triweekly ?) *Express*

1866? - 1876

[Seaton, editor, *Courier* 1846-49; *Times* 1849].

## *Evening Telegram*

William J. Herder  
Proprietor, Publisher, Printer  
1879-1922

James Murray  
Editor (?)  
1879-1882

Alexander A. Parsons  
Editor  
1882-1904

Star and Conception Day Semi-Weekly Advertiser  
Publisher and Printer  
Proprietor with W. R. Squancy  
1872-1873

*Evening Mercury*  
John E. A. Furneaux  
Publisher & Proprietor  
1882-1907



*Evening Herald*  
1890-1920

P. T. McGrath  
Editor  
1895-1907

Appendix 2  
House of Assembly

District	1832	1837	1842	1848	1852
Bonavista	Wm. Brown	H.A Emerson	Robert Carter	Robert Carter	J.H. Warren
Burin	Wm. Hooper	H. Butler	C. Benning	J.G. Falle	C. Benning
Ferryland	Robert Carter	P. Winsor	T. Glen	P.Winsor	P. Winsor
Fortune Bay	N. W. Hoyles	W. B. Row	B. Robinson	H.W. Hoyles	H.W. Hoyles
Conception Bay	Peter Brown James Power C. Cozens Robert Pack	Peter Brown James Power John McCarthy A.W. Godfrey	Thomas Ridley John Munn J.L. Prendergast E. Hanrahan	J.L. Prendergast Nicholas Molloy Richard Rankin E. Hanrahan	J.Hayward ? Thomas Talbot * ? E. Hanrahan
Placentia & St. Mary's	R. F. Sweetman J. H. Martin	J.V. Nugent * Patrick Doyle	John Dillon Simon Morris	Ambrose Shea * J.Delaney	G.J. Hogsett * A. Shea *
St. John's	P. Kough John Kent William Thomas	W. Carson * J. Kent P. Morris	W. Carson.* L. O'Brien J. V. Nugent*	John Kent L. O'Brien R.J. Parsons *	John Kent P.F. Little R.J. Parsons *
Trinity	J. B. Garland	T. F. Moore	Richard Barnes	T. B. Job	S. March
Twillingate & Fogo	T. Bennett	E.J. Dwyer	J. Slade	G.H. Emerson	G.H. Emerson

\* Newspaper proprietors, publishers, and/or editors



## House of Assembly

District	1855	1859	1861
Bay de Verde	J. Bemister	J. Bemister	J. Bemister
Bonavista	R. Carter	S. March	S. March
Bonavista	J.H. Warren	J.H. Warren	J.H. Warren
Bonavista	M.W. Walbank	M. Walbank	M.W. Walbank
Burgeo & Lapoile	R. Prowse	James Seaton *	D.W. Prowse
Burin	C. Benning	Ambrose Shea *	H.W. Hoyles
Burin	P. Morris	J.J. Rogerson	Ed. Evans
Carbonear	E. Hanrahan	E. Hanrahan	E. Hanrahan
Ferryland	T. Glen E.D. Shea * H. W. Hoyles	T. Glen E.D. Shea*	T. Glen E.D. Shea*
Fortune Bay		Carter,RN	Carter,RN
Harbour Grace	J. Hayward J.L. Prendergast	J. Hayward J.L. Prendergast	No return
Harbour Main	T. Talbot * T. Tobin	P. Nowlan C. Fary	Invalid return
Placentia & St. Mary's	G.J. Hogsett * J. Delaney J. Kelly	G. J. Hogsett * J. Delaney J. English *	A. Shea* R. McGrath W. Flood
Port de Grave	R. Brown	J. Leamon	J. Leamon
St. John's East	John Kent R.J.Parsons* P. Winsor	John Kent J.Kavanagh RJParsons*	John Kent J.Kavanagh RJParsons*
St. John's West	P.F. Little A. Shea * John Fox	J. Casey T.S. Dwyer P. Barron	J. Casey T. Talbot * H. Renouf
Trinity	FBT Carter S. March J. Winter	FBT Carter S. Rendell J. Winter	FBT Carter S. Rendell J. Winter
Twillingate & Fogo	W.H. Ellis T. Knight	W. V. Whiteaway T. Knight	W. V. Whiteaway T. Knight

\* Newspaper proprietors, publishers, and/or editors

Appendix 2  
House of Assembly

District	1865	1869	1873	1874	1878
Bay de Verde	J Bemister	J. Bemister	J.J. Rogerson	J.J. Rogerson	A. Penney
Bonavista	J. Warren J. Oakley J.T. Burton*	J. Noonan F. Winton* W. Barnes	C. Bowering AJW McNeilly JT Burton*	J. Warren C. Bowering AJW McNeilly	F. Winton* G. Skelton J. Saint
Burgoe & Lapointe	D.W. Prowse	P. Emerson	P. Emerson	P. Emerson	A.M. McKay**
Burin	FBT Carter E. Evans	FBT Carter E. Evans	James S. Winter C.R. Ayre	C.R. Ayre J.S. Winter	J.S. Winter J.J. Rogerson
Carbonear	J. Rorke	J. Rorke	J. Rorke	J. Rorke	J. Rorke
Ferryland	T. Glen M. Kearney	T. Glen T. Badcock	T. Glen R. Rafus	R. Rafus J. Conroy	J. Conroy D. Greene
Fortune Bay	T.R. Bennett	T.R. Bennett	T.R. Bennett	R. Alexander	J. O. Fraser
Harbour Grace	J. Hayward Wm. Green	J. Munn W. S. Green	FBT Carter W. Wood	A. Shea* J. Goden	A. Shea* C. Dawe
Harbour Main	G. Hogsett C. Pury	J.I. Little J. Kennedy	J.I. Little P. Nowlan	J.I. Little P. Nowlan	J.I. Little P. Nowlan
Placentia & St. Mary's	A. Shea * P. Barron T. O'Reilly	C.F. Bennett* R.J. Parsons Jr. H. Renouf	C.F. Bennett* J. Collins H. Renouf	C.F. Bennett* J. Collins M. Dwyer	W.J.S. Donnelly J. Collins M. Dwyer
Port de Grave	J. Leamon	HJB Woods	J. Bartlett	N. Rabbits	N. Norman
St. John's East	John Kent R.J. Parsons * Kavanagh	W. Walsh J. Jordan RJ Parsons*	J. Dearin R.J. Parsons* R.J. Kent	R.J. Kent R.J. Parsons* J.J. Dearin	O' Mara R. J. Kent R.J. Parsons, Jr.
St. John's West	J. Casey T. Talbot * H. Renouf	Brennan Talbot* Renouf	Tessier Scott Fenelon	Tessier Fenelon P.J. Scott	Tessier Scott Fenelon
Trinity Bay	S. Rendell F.J. Wyatt S. March	S. Rendell T. Ridley R. Alsop	J. Steer J. Warren Whiteway	Whiteway J. Steer J. Watson	Whiteway J. Watson J. Rendell
Twillingate & Fogo	Whiteway T. Knight	C. Duder S. McKay	Carter Duder McKay	Carter Duder Kelligrew	McNeilly S. Carter R.P. Rice

\* Newspaper proprietors, publishers, editors.      \*\* Telegraph manager

## House of Assembly

District	1882	1885	1889	1893	1897
Bay de Verde	L. Garland	S. March McNeilly	EWhite HJB Woods	HJB Woods G. Moores	A. Kean W. Rogerson
Bonavista	F. Winton* W.B. Grieve G. Skelton	J.Noonan A. Kean F. White	Morrison Blandford A. Morine*	Morrison Blandford A.Morine*	Blandford, J. Cowan J.A. Robinson *
Burgoe & Lapoile	A.M. McKay**	A.M. McKay**	J. Murray*	J. Murray*	H. Mont*
Burin	J.S. Winter J.E. Peters	J. Peters H. Le Messurier	Rothwell J.S. Tait	J.S. Tait Wm Payne	J.S. Winter J. Lake
Carbonear	A. Penney	A.Penney	Wm Duff	Wm Duff	W. Duff
Ferryland	D.Greene A.Goodridge	D.Greene G. Shea	G. Shea D.Greene	M. Cashin D. Greene	M. Cashin G. Shea
Fortune Bay	J.O. Fraser	R. Bond	J. Studly	J.O. Fraser Jr.	H. Hayward
Harbour Grace	A. Shea* C. Dawe	JSWinter C. Dawe J.Godden	Whitely E. Dawe R.Munn	H. dawe E. Dawe R. Munn	Horwood E. Dawe W. Oske
Harbour Main	J.I. Little McDonnel	J. Veitch McDonnel Murphy	FJ Morris Woodford	FJ Morris Woodford	J.St.John Woodford
Placentia & St. Mary's	W.J.S. Donnelly A. Bradshaw M. Tobin	J McGrath Donnelly Emerson	G. Emerson RO'Dwyer J.McGrath	McGrath Emmerson Donnelly	Donnelly Callahan M. Carty
Port de Grave	J. Bartlett	G. Hutchings	J.A. Clift	C. Dawe	C. Dawe
St. John's East	R.J. Kent J. Dearin R.J. Parsons Jr	RJ Kent A Shea* MO'Mara	TJ Murphy JJ Dearin J. Halleran	J. Fox TJMurphy L. Purlong	J. Fox TMurphy L.Furlong
St. John's West	P.J. Scott P. White J Callanan	E. Morris PJ Scott J.Callanan	EP Morris J. Day L. Gearin	E.P.Morris J. C.Tessier M.Furlong	EPMorris J. Tessier Callanan
Trinity Bay	Whiteway J. Boyd R. Bond	RThorburn WB.Grieve E. Watson	Whiteway R. Bond D.Welber*	Whiteway R. Bond J. Watson	Brenner Watson L. March
Twillingate & Fogo	S. McKay R. Rice J.Thompson*	Goodridge S.McKay M. Knight	E. Burgess Thompson* T. Peyton J. Rolls	Thompson* Goodridge M. Knight T.C. Duder	R. Bond Browning Goodridge TCDuder
St. George's	M.H. Carty	M.H.Carty	M.H.Carty	J. Keating	M. Gibbs
White Bay	J.H. Boone				
St. Barbe		Bradshaw	G. Fearn	A.Parsons*	Bradshaw

\* Newspaper proprietors, publishers, editors.

\*\* Telegraph manager

## APPENDIX 3

## Brief Profiles of Daily Newspapers 1860-1899

*Morning Post and Shipping Gazette* (1860): Started as a weekly in 1843, it was the first newspaper to publish daily in Newfoundland, and although the venture was short-lived, it was the first, and, as far as determined, the only local newspaper gathering and distributing telegraphic news. Given the monopoly position of the Newfoundland London and New York Telegraph Company (later Anglo-American Telegraph Company) restraints may have been put on Ward's enterprise which reverted to weekly production before he died in 1862. No other local newspaper proprietor followed Ward's lead which is also suggestive of control by the telegraph company.

*St. John's Daily News* (1860-1867): Started by Robert Winton in partnership with his brother Francis Winton who left the paper to start his own daily, the *Day Book* in 1862 in opposition to his brother's. The two men were not only business rivals but slighted each other in their editorials. Although Robert Winton made a career of newspaper publishing, he was not taken seriously and was often a target of ridicule. His daily newspaper seems to have had little influence; its longevity (almost six and a half years) may simply be the result of the Wintons' long experience in newspaper publishing.

*Day Book/Morning Chronicle* (1862-1865)(1865-1873): The *Day Book* started by Francis Winton 1 January 1862, continued daily until 1865, when it appears to have

been purchased by C.F. Bennett. Its title then changed to *Morning Chronicle* and became the platform for Bennett's anti-Confederation campaign in the years leading up to the 1869 election. The paper continued until 1873 when it reverted to semi-weekly and then weekly to 1881.

*Newfoundland Express* (1866): It started as a weekly in a partnership between J. T. Burton and James Seaton in 1851. At the beginning of 1866 it went daily and continued for almost all of that year, at which time Burton left the paper. James Seaton became proprietor and editor, publishing irregularly three times a week until 1876.

*Public Ledger/Daily Ledger/Our Country* (1868) (1883) One of the earliest and foremost newspapers in Newfoundland, it was only under the direction of Elizabeth Brown Winton, with Adam Scott as editor, that the *Public Ledger* was published as the *Daily Ledger* for the year 1868 with some interest in telegraphic news. A second attempt to go daily by F.W. Bowden in 1879, by then the proprietor, also failed. In 1883 Bowden started *Our Country*, intended as a continuation of the *Public Ledger*. For the first three months it was published three days a week; then daily for five months before ceasing publication. A year later Bowden appeared to have secured a contract to publish the proceedings of the legislature, but that lasted less than one month. Erratic and inconsistent, Bowden could hardly be taken seriously as a newspaper publisher.

*St. John's Free Press and Daily Advertiser* (1877): Started in 1877 by John Rochfort in St. John's as a daily, it lasted only six weeks. Rochfort's efforts are significant in as much as they were directed by the technological changes taking place at the time. In 1879, shortly after the first official telephone was installed in Newfoundland, he went to Carbonear and started a weekly newspaper called the *Carbonear Herald and Outport Telephone*. In less than a year that newspaper was taken over by E.J. Brennan who renamed it the *Carbonear Herald and Railroad Journal*. In light of the railway contract being negotiated at that time, the change in name seems significant. In fact, the 'railroad journal' lasted only a few months.

*Morning Herald* (1879): started as a daily in 1879 by Pierce Brien, a name not prominent in newspaper publishing in St. John's, or elsewhere, with this one exception. The paper seems to have made no impression on other editors of the period, and was in the market less than 12 weeks. Brien made headline news in the early twentieth century for his work in perfecting the monkey-wrench. At that time he was described as a St. John's job-printer with a print room "in some back room in the West End" who stood to gain international fame and fortune for his invention.<sup>1</sup>

*The Evening Telegram* (1879 - ): started in St. John's in 1879 as a daily, and continues to the present as *The Telegram*. As the most enduring newspaper enterprise in Newfoundland's history, the *Evening Telegram* began as a very ordinary newspaper,

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<sup>1</sup>*Evening Telegram*, 3 December 1903.

offering no more, and sometimes less than some weeklies in the market at the time. Its use of pink paper may have been key to its success in attracting advertisers, which was considered essential to survival. It was especially important because of its vigorous opposition to the railway in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet the ability of its editor A. A. Parsons to reverse his position showed that he was both politically ambitious and proudly partisan.

*Register* (1880): Started as a daily in 1880 by a St. John's stock-holding company of 12 members in support of the Liberal Party, it lasted 13 weeks.

*Terra Nova Advocate* (1881): It started in St. John's under the proprietorship of Joseph English in 1875 as a tri-weekly, then a weekly to 1881, then daily for about four months. It reverted to a tri-weekly then to a semi-weekly and finally a weekly until it ceased publishing in 1892 prior to the great fire.

*Evening Mercury/Evening Herald* (1882 - 1920): started as a daily in 1882 in St. John's by a group of merchants in support of the railway. It had as editors between 1882 and 1890 Moses Harvey and Alfred B. Morine, two of the most active proponents of the railway. Its change in name coincided with the defeat of the Reform Party in 1889 which re-emerged as the Patriotic Association. These coincidences lend credence to the claim that A.J.W McNeily and his brother Robert McNeily were then closely involved with the newspaper.

*Colonist/DailyTribune* (1886-1893): It started as a daily by long-time St. John's printers Devine and O'Mara in the interests of the Liberal Party with Patrick Bowers as editor. The newspaper is conspicuous for its non-sectarian practice.

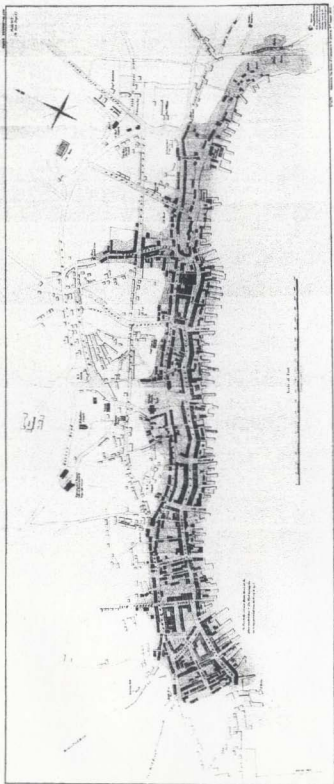
*Morning Despatch* (1892): issued one month after the great fire by H.W. Le Messurier who filled in briefly as editor of the *Evening Herald* after 1890. The *Morning Despatch* was in the market less than five weeks and appears to have been of little consequence.

*Royal Gazette* (1892) Newfoundland's first newspaper, it started as a weekly in 1807 and was a quasi-official government organ. It issued daily for a short period of six weeks in 1892 to provide information from government sources as a consequence of the great fire.

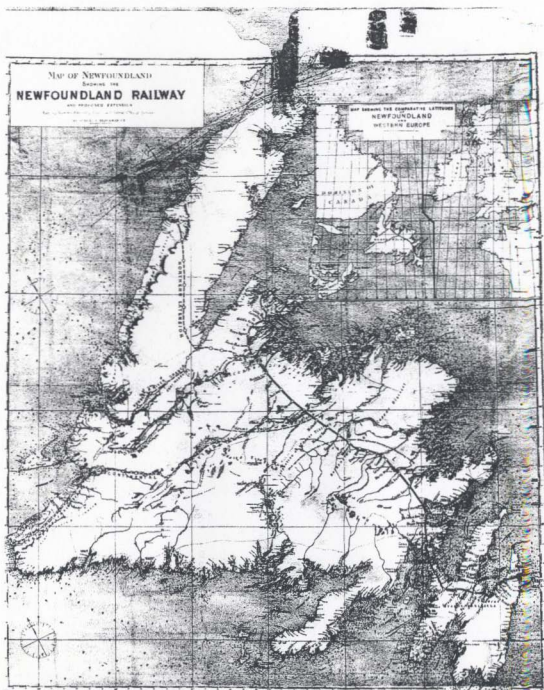
*Daily Review* (1899): It started as the *Trade Review* in St. John's in 1892, a bi-weekly and weekly which continued to publish until 1948. Proprietors Devine and O'Mara, supporters of the Liberal Party, issued the *Daily Review* only in the two months leading up to the election of 1899.

*Daily News* (1894 - 1984): Started in St. John's as a daily in 1894, it was the only newspaper to identify its interests as strictly toward the municipality of St. John's. It is conspicuous for its silence during the railway debates in the late 1890s.

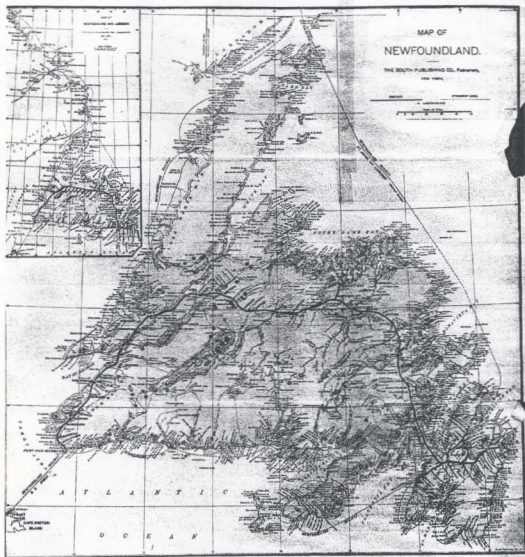




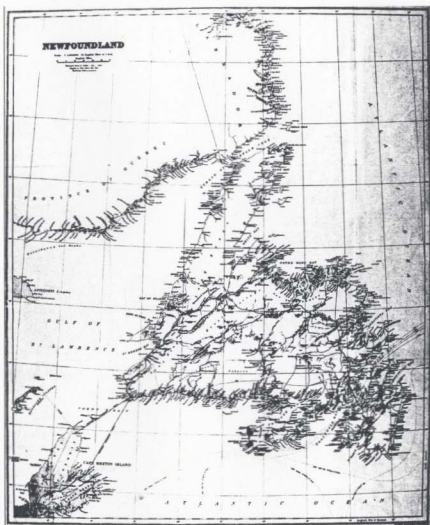
CNS Map 330, Map of St. John's, Newfoundland, showing extent of fire of 1851, relative to stress relief, by Standage & Co., Lithographer.



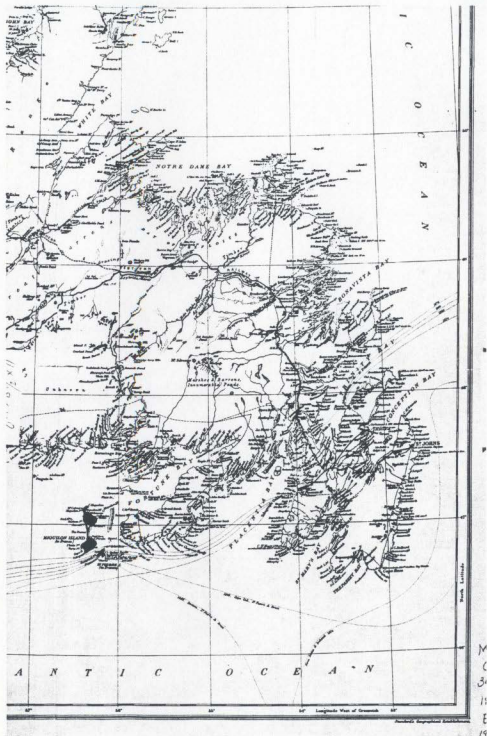
CNS Map 173. Map of Newfoundland showing the Newfoundland Railway and proposed extension 1882. Inset map showing comparative latitudes of Newfoundland and Western Europe. Map reduced from the Admiralty Chart with latest official surveys, by Albert Blackman. Published by G. W. Bacon & Co., 127 Strand, London. Source: Whiteway, W. V. Sir. Papers, CNS Archive Collection 026.



CNS Map 9. Map of Newfoundland showing railways, steamship lines, and lighthouses, 1899. Inset: Map of Newfoundland and Labrador. Published by The South Publishing Co., New York.



Map of Newfoundland 1894 showing telegraph lines and cables and proposed steamboat routes. Reprint edition 1972 by Edward Stanford Ltd., Stanford's Geographical Establishment, London, England. Source: Prowse, D. W. *History of Newfoundland from the English, colonial and foreign records*, 1894. Enlarged portion adapted from original, showing the Avalon Peninsula, Conception Bay, Trinity Bay, and Notre Dame Bay, where newspapers were published during the nineteenth century.



Source: Prowse, D.W. *History of Newfoundland*, 1894. Reprint edition 1972 by Edward Stanford Ltd., Stanford's Geographical Establishment, London, England. Enlarged portion adapted from the original showing the Avalon Peninsula, Conception Bay, Trinity Bay, and Notre Dame Bay, where newspapers were published during the nineteenth century.

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*Newfoundland Guardian and Christian Intelligencer*

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